



2023 Annual Report

A Letter from Molly Pelzer, Midwest Dairy CEO

I am pleased to share the results of Midwest Dairy's work from the year 2023. Midwest Dairy staff have worked hard to bring your voice to the marketplace as we partner with others to build trust and demand for dairy. While the work is refined each year, it is always grounded in supporting the vision and mission of the organization. As a reminder, Midwest Dairy's mission is to work with others to give consumers an excellent dairy experience, and our vision is to bring dairy to life for a better world.

Midwest Dairy's promotion work is focused on meeting consumers where they are and staying relevant in their ever-changing lives. I have seen how much consumers love dairy and are looking for "permission" in a way, to eat more of it. They appreciate dairy's ease for snacking and meal solutions.

Midwest Dairy's farmer board members and staff are dedicated to maximizing your investment in dairy promotion and research. Staff share your passion for dairy and are committed to working with the best partners to reach consumers. We share science-based research funded by your checkoff with proof that dairy nourishes people and the planet. Our partners join us to advocate for dairy's role in a healthy diet and showcase your commitment to caring for the earth. Checkoff's investment in research unlocks opportunities with partners and is truly valued.

In 2023, Midwest Dairy worked with exceptional partners in many different spaces. From food service partners to grocers, social media influencers, wellness professionals, educators, and so many more, we moved the needle for dairy. A few of our partners relied on the voices of farmers through their campaigns; This is a fresh and modern take on connecting the dairy farmer to the consumer. Uplifting dairy farmer voices through retail and foodservice partners showcases how dairy is produced responsibly and locally to consumers. For example, a Minnesota grocery chain, Cub Foods, kept dairy products in front of their shoppers by featuring an expert's voice through a new campaign called "Farmer of Cub." The farmer who fit this role was Kennedy Youngren, a dietitian, mom, and fourth-generation dairy farmer. Besides being a proud Minnesota native, Kennedy's unique background as both mom and dietitian, combined with her strong dairy farm roots, made her a highly credible source about dairy and nutrition, making her the perfect farmer spokesperson for this partner.

In the 2023 Annual Report, you will see how dairy promotion and research went to work to build consumer trust and grow dairy sales. Your personal stories and commitment to the care of your cows and the planet are vital in our work to connect with consumers so that they can choose dairy with confidence.

Finally, I would like to thank all the dairy farmers who have supported me over the almost 40 years that I have been involved in dairy promotion. As I close my tenure, I leave with confidence that Midwest Dairy's staff, under the leadership of the next CEO, Corey Scott, will continue to deliver on your checkoff investment with results that will make you proud. Midwest Dairy will remain dedicated to creating a lasting and positive impact on your behalf with dairy promotion and research.

A Letter from Charles Krause, Midwest Dairy Corporate Board Chair

Thank you for taking the time to review the 2023 Annual Report and learning more about how your checkoff investment worked for you this past year. As you review the report, I hope you appreciate and support the work done by checkoff. The report features many examples of Midwest Dairy's work with partners to increase demand and sales, build trust, facilitate research and innovation, and develop dairy leaders.

Last fall, Molly Pelzer, the CEO of Midwest Dairy, announced her retirement. Molly has contributed almost 40 years of experience to the dairy checkoff, and I want to celebrate her many achievements. She has served in leadership roles across the organization, making significant positive impacts throughout her career. Over the years, I have appreciated Molly's work ethic, devotion to dairy farmers, and commitment to making a difference. I wish her the best as she begins and enjoys her retirement journey.

As I wish Molly well, I would like to take a moment to welcome the new CEO of Midwest Dairy, Corey Scott. Corey is an experienced dairy leader with over 15 years of food and agriculture experience. Before joining Midwest Dairy, she served as the Vice President of Sales and Marketing for Athian. She has also held several leadership positions with Land O'Lakes. Corey currently resides in Marine on Saint Croix, Minnesota, and has expressed how honored she feels to step into the CEO role and lead such a respected organization.

I want to warmly welcome Corey and assure you that everyone is committed to supporting her as she begins her leadership role in checkoff. Welcome, Corey!

Throughout 2023, I saw Midwest Dairy continually be a leader among other states across the federation and collaborate with Dairy Management Inc. on many checkoff efforts. We know collaboration is key and helps checkoff maximize your checkoff investment.

As I think about Midwest Dairy's leadership over the past year, a great example includes checkoff's work in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math programming, also known as STEM. Checkoff is working hard to get dairy farming conversations in the classroom as we share how dairy products are responsibly and sustainably produced and their health and wellness benefits. Midwest Dairy is working with the National Dairy Council to bring leading science educators and curriculum directors to dairy farms to discover ideas that fit into the high school curriculum. These efforts will continue to help build trust and sales for dairy for many years to come.

Checkoff also continues to showcase dairy's wellness benefits and role in sustainable food systems through key collaborations with medical thought leaders like Mayo Clinic. This includes utilizing Mayo Clinic outreach channels to reach health professionals through conferences, podcasts, and articles in Mayo Clinic Press."

Midwest Dairy continues to value farmer-led decisions and values your input to maximize checkoff investments. Looking forward, I am confident that our shared commitment to the dairy industry will drive Midwest Dairy's success. Sharing your dairy story is important, and it's a responsibility we all share. Without you, Midwest Dairy's work is not possible. Thank you for your support.

2023 Expenses by Spending Category

\$25 Million Total Expenses

Where Your Checkoff Goes:

National Projects and Partnerships (27%) – The 2.5 cent funding sent to Dairy Management, Inc. for research and promotion and the United Dairy Industry Association fee, both part of our membership commitment.

Dairy Experience (43%) – Consumer focused programming and implementation of key components of the dairy checkoff's nationwide Unified Marketing Plan.

Sales - Demand (14.5%) – Building dairy sales through retail and food service.

Sales – Youth (3%) – Drive dairy sales including work with targeted school districts.

Global Positioning (6%) – Relationship building with credentialed health professionals to create dairy advocates.

Trust - Adult (10%) – The Undeniably Dairy platform and other marketing communication using third-party influencers to reach consumers.

Trust - Youth (8.5%) – Ag literacy programs to drive awareness of sustainable nutrition through programs to grow trust among youth and their parents.

Strategic Insights (1%) – Evaluating consumer attitude and behavior to measure trends in consumer trust.

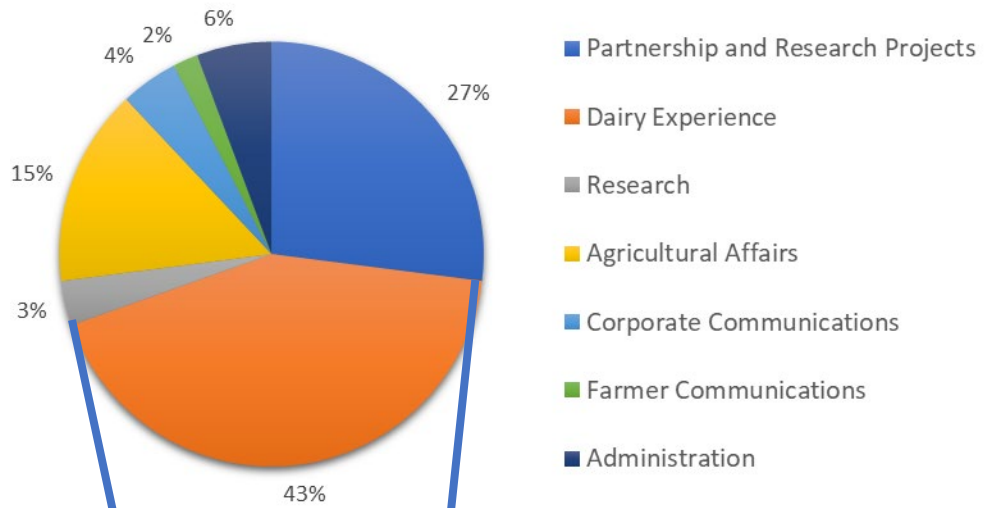
Research (3%) – Product research through Midwest Dairy Food Research Center and efforts focused on nutrition research and consumer insights.

Ag Affairs (15%) – Work building coalitions with ag groups focused on reaching consumers, dairy ambassadors, farmer leadership development programs, and work in environmental sustainability.

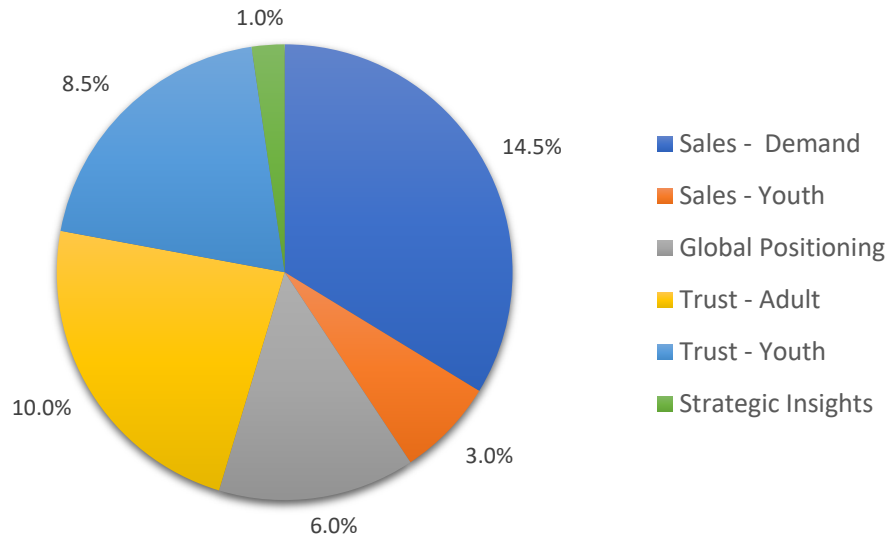
Corporate Communications (4%) & Farmer Communications (2%) – Positioning with stakeholders, distributing content through digital channels, and issues preparedness. Communication with internal audiences, including farmer investors, board members, and employees.

Administration (6%) – Includes the cost of our accounting and network infrastructure, as well as our governance of board costs.

2023 Expenses by Spending Category



Dairy Experience Breakdown



Midwest Dairy is Funded by Farmers

2023 Revenue by Division

Total Revenue: \$25 million

Minnesota	\$10.3	42.1%
Iowa	\$5.6	23%
South Dakota	\$4.5	18.2%
Nebraska	\$1.3	5.2%
Illinois	\$0.7	3.1%
Mo-Kan Division	\$0.7	2.8%
Ozarks	\$0.5	2.0%
North Dakota	\$0.3	1.3%
Interest and Other Income	\$0.6	2.3%

2023 MIDWEST DAIRY BOARD LEADERSHIP



CHARLES KRAUSE, CHAIR

Charles Krause, of Krause Holsteins, located in Buffalo, Minnesota, is the chair of Midwest Dairy. Krause Holsteins is a multigenerational dairy farm that first began in 1959 and currently milks around 350 cows. The Krause family has been farming in Wright County for over 150 years, and Krause himself is a fifth-generation farmer. Krause and his wife, Robyn, graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1991 and then had the opportunity to join the family farm full-time. Krause also farms with his son, Andrew, and his

daughter, Morgan, helps wherever needed. Krause grows his own feed on 500 acres.

Krause plays a prominent role in the dairy promotion industry. In addition to serving as Midwest Dairy chair, he has been an officer on the Midwest Dairy division board since 2007 and a member of the corporate board since 2010. His past officer position includes being the corporate board first vice chair since 2016. He also serves on the United Dairy Industry Association (UDIA) board as the Secretary and serves the Global Dairy Platform as a United States Ambassador.

In the past, Krause has received recognition as:

- Farmer Communicator of the Year award from the National Milk Producers Federation
- National Dairy Shrine Progressive Dairyman of the Year
- Minnesota Milk Producer of the Year
- Dairy Farmers of America Members of Distinction
- Minnesota FFA Hall of Fame Inductee

Krause is also involved in a variety of dairy and community leadership positions such as Dairy Farmers of America-Central Area Council Vice Chair, Centra Sota Cooperative Board of Directors and the Buffalo FFA Alumni. In his spare time, Charles enjoys traveling with his wife, Robyn.



MOLLY PELZER, CEO

Molly Pelzer is the CEO of Midwest Dairy, the dairy promotion organization working on behalf of dairy farm families across 10 Midwestern states to build trust and demand for dairy products. Pelzer is the organization's third CEO in its 24 years of dairy history. Her proven experience in developing programs and resources comes at an exciting time as the organization continues its focus on consumer-centric goals to drive sales and enhance consumer trust for dairy. Her longstanding service to Midwest Dairy, family ties to agriculture and expertise as

a registered dietitian root her to an industry she is committed to serving.

In her role as CEO, Pelzer provides strategic guidance to Midwest Dairy's staff of more than 57 employees as they work to fulfill both the organization's vision: to bring dairy to life, and its mission: to give consumers an excellent dairy experience. Through her leadership, Midwest Dairy is focusing on maximizing dairy farmers' investment in the dairy checkoff by strategic collaboration with targeted retailers, foodservice, wellness and industry partners as well as focusing on research that leads to the development of products that meet the needs of today's changing consumer.

Pelzer also plays the lead role in ensuring the Midwest dairy industry captures its share of the growing global and domestic demand for dairy. Consumers in the U.S. and around the world are increasingly turning to dairy foods because they taste great and offer a strong nutritional profile that includes protein, a nutrient many are looking for in their diets. The U.S. dairy industry is committed to sustainable nutrition, a position recognized favorably among domestic and multinational food companies.

Pelzer joined Midwest Dairy in 1984 and has held various executive leadership roles. In her most recent position as chief experience officer, Pelzer led the development of the organization's strategic priorities. Prior to Midwest Dairy, she worked with the Midland Dairy Association, as well as Dairy Council, Inc., both former checkoff organizations that are now part of the Midwest Dairy region. A registered dietitian, Pelzer graduated from the University of Missouri – Columbia.

CORPORATE BOARD OFFICERS FOR 2023



Corporate Board members include Dan Hotvedt, First Vice Chair; Charles Krause, Chair; Rita Young, Secretary; Bill Deutsch, Second Vice Chair; and Matt Schelling, Treasurer.

DIVISION BOARD LEADERSHIP



Board Officers:

- Brent Mueller, Vice Chair
- Glen Meier, Treasurer
- Bill Deutsch, Chair
- Amy Hildebrandt, Secretary

2023 ILLINOIS DIVISION

Illinois Division Board Members

Bold indicates Corporate Board member

- Doug Block, Pearl City
- **Bill Deutsch, Sycamore**
- Kristi Dinderman, Orangeville
- Frank Doll, Pocahontas
- Bryan Henrichs, Breese
- Amy Hildebrandt, South Beloit
- David Jarden, Staunton
- Kurt Johnson, Greenville
- Kappy Koch, Tremont
- Donald Mackinson, Pontiac
- Glen Meier, Ridott
- Craig Meng, Freeburg
- **Brent Mueller, Garden Prairie**
- Steve Obert, Orangeville
- Toby Probst, Wheeler

DIVISION BOARD LEADERSHIP



Board officers:

- Jonna Schutte, Secretary
- Dan Hotvedt, Chair
- Lee Maassen, Vice Chair
- Pam Bolin, Treasurer

2023 IOWA DIVISION

Iowa Division Board Members

Bold indicates Corporate Board member

- **Pam Bolin, Clarksville**
- Doug Carroll, (Ex Officio to Corporate Board), Ryan
- Gerrit Davelaar, Inwood
- Dan Dietzenbach, Fort Atkinson
- Jeff Dresser, Keokuk
- Jolene Duitscher, Rolfe
- **Alan Feuerhelm, Le Mars**
- Fred Hall (Ex Officio), ISU
- **Robert Horst, Bristow**
- **Dan Hotvedt, Decorah**
- Patrick Jones, Spencer
- **Lee Maassen, Maurice**
- Dennis Mashek, Calmar
- Anthony Nunes, Sibley
- Josie Rozum, Ely
- **Matt Schelling, Orange City**
- **Jonna Schutte, Monona**
- Matt Simon, Dyersville
- Madison Skubal, Wayland

DIVISION BOARD LEADERSHIP



Board officers:

- Mindi Arendt, Secretary
- Kristine Spadgenske, Chair
- Rita Young, Treasurer
- Kate McAndrews, Vice Chair

2023 MINNESOTA DIVISION

Minnesota Division Board Members

Bold indicates Corporate Board member

- **Anthony Anderson, Henning**
- **Mindi Arendt, Mazeppa**
- Megan Herberg, St. Peter
- **Eric Hoese, Mayer**
- **Shirley Hulinsky, Burtrum**
- **Margaret Johnson, Fountain**
- **Karen Kasper, Owatonna**
- **Charles Krause, Buffalo**
- **Sarah Kuechle, Eden Valley**
- **Barb Liebenstein, Dundas**
- **Kate McAndrews, Sauk Centre**
- Doug Popp, Royalton
- Megan Schrupp (Ex Officio), Eden Valley
- **Dave Schwartz, Slayton**
- Eric Sonnek, Foreston
- **Kristine Spadgenske, Menahga**
- Rita Vander Kooi (Ex Officio), Worthington
- **Suzanne Vold, Glenwood**
- **Rita Young, Plainview**

DIVISION BOARD LEADERSHIP



Board officers:

- Curtis Steenbock, Treasurer
- Donna Telle, Secretary
- Byron Lehman, Chair
- Steve Ohlde, Vice Chair (not pictured)

2023 MO-KAN DIVISION BOARD

Mo-Kan Division Board Members

Bold indicates Corporate Board member

- Alfred Brandt, Linn
- Amy Dudeck, Oregon
- Lynda Foster, Fort Scott
- Brian Haverkamp, Seneca
- Chris Heins, Higginsville
- Michael Hemme, Concordia
- **Byron Lehman, Newton**
- Orville Miller, (Ex Officio to Corporate Board), Hutchinson
- Tom Oelrichs, Mora
- Steve Ohlde, Linn
- **Alex Peterson, Trenton**
- David Rottinghaus, Seneca
- Curtis Steenbock, Longford
- Steve Strickler, Iola
- Donna Telle, Uniontown

DIVISION BOARD LEADERSHIP



Board officers:

- Jodi Cast, Secretary/Treasurer
- Mary Temme, Chair
- Joyce Racicky, Vice Chair

2023 NEBRASKA DIVISION

Nebraska Division Board Members

Bold indicates Corporate Board member

- Mike Amen, Norfolk
- Greg Bleeker, Emerson
- Jodi Cast, Beaver Crossing
- David Crook, Humboldt
- Paul Kononoff, PhD (Ex Officio), UNL
- Doug Nuttelman, Stromsburg
- **Joyce Racicky, Mason City**
- Marshall Reece (Ex Officio), AMPI
- Larry Schuster, Pickrell
- Heath Snodgrass (Ex Officio), Orchard
- **Mary Temme, Wayne**

DIVISION BOARD LEADERSHIP



Board officers:

- Sue Kleingartner, Chair
- Terry Entzminger, Vice Chair
- Kim Ledger, Secretary
- Lilah Krebs, Treasurer

2023 NORTH DAKOTA DIVISION

North Dakota Division Board Members

Bold indicates Corporate Board member

- Johnny Campos (Ex Officio), Cass Clay
- Terry Entzminger, Jamestown
- Janal Hoff, Richardton
- **Sue Kleingartner, Gackle**
- **Lilah Krebs, Gladstone**
- Nathan Kroh (Ex Officio), ND Department of Agriculture
- Kim Ledger, Bismarck
- Denise Rohweder, Wishek
- Guillermo Scaglia (Ex Officio), NDSU
- Toby Tormaschy, Richardton
- Piet vanBedaf, Carrington

DIVISION BOARD LEADERSHIP



Board officers:

- Nathan Roth, Chair
- Marilyn Calvin, Vice Chair
- Carrie Rantz, Secretary
- Mark Fellwock, Treasurer

2023 OZARKS DIVISION

Ozarks Division Board Members

Bold indicates Corporate Board member

- Marilyn Calvin, Mt. Vernon
- Charles Coblentz, Chouteau
- Jack Dill, Conway
- Earl Dotson, Marionville
- **Mark Fellwock, Monett**
- Bill Haak, Gentry
- Randy Mooney, Rogersville
- Gene Morrison, West Plains
- Carrie Rantz, Spokane
- **Nathan Roth, Mountain Grove**
- Scott VanZyverden, Marshfield
- Craig Westfall, Halfway

DIVISION BOARD LEADERSHIP



Board officers:

- Maartje Lemstra, Secretary
- Marv Post, Chair
- Kevin Van Winkle, Vice Chair (not pictured)
- Jogchum Andrenge, Treasurer (not pictured)

2023 SOUTH DAKOTA DIVISION

South Dakota Division Board Members

Bold indicates Corporate Board member

- Sanjeev Anand (Ex Officio), SDSU
- Jogchum Andringa, Brandt
- Riley Boadwine, Baltic
- Dorothy Elliott, Lake Norden
- Evan Grong (Ex Officio), Valley Queen Cheese
- Cole Hoyer, Bruce
- Maartje Lemstra, Humboldt
- Kim Maher (Ex Officio), Agropur
- **Allen Merrill, Parker**
- Doug Ode, Brandon
- **Marv Post, Volga**
- Hunter Roberts (Ex Officio), SD Department of Agriculture
- Daniel Thyen, Waverly
- Kevin Van Winkle, Canistota
- **Tom Walsh, Degraff, MN**

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Trust

Influencer retreat gets the conversation started online

Ready to roll up your sleeves and dive headfirst into the world of sustainable dairy farming? This was a question checkoff recently asked as we recruited four online social media influencers for an adventure of a lifetime, experiencing a working dairy farm. This opportunity allowed a select few to share genuine, authentic excitement for dairy as they captured their own on-farm experience, the stories behind dairy products, and their passion for sustainable farming practices.



Last November, four social media influencers were invited to step into the captivating world of dairy in southeastern Minnesota. While shadowing family farmers and getting on-farm experiences, they were encouraged to document it all through photos and videos to share with their social media following. The influencers were from different cities across the Midwest Dairy 10-state region who had some interest in the industry. Whether that interest stemmed from the joy of searching for adventure and wanting to try something new, a deep love and passion for animals, or reconnecting their farm roots from childhood, each influencer walked on to this dairy farm open-minded and eager to learn. These influences included Crystal Sorem of Minneapolis, Minnesota, Dante Barger of St. Louis, Missouri, Juan David of Chicago, Illinois, and Iyanna McNeely, also of Chicago, Illinois.

The two-day #DairyBootcamp consisted of each influencer participating in several challenge activities. On day one, influencers dove right in with the first challenge in the Milking Parlor, where they found out if they could keep up with the rotary milker at Daley Farm of Lewiston. Then, they got a farm tour and learned about sustainability systems on the farm, like water recycling and upcycled ingredients. Challenge number two was at the host's farmhouse, where they all got to take a crack at making their own butter. Afterward, they flavored the butter with different ingredients to enjoy with a homecooked meal. They ended the night with dinner and conversation with the Daley host family.

Day two offered another in-depth look at a working dairy farm, learning about calf care. Each influencer took turns trying to lift a newborn calf, which was a lot larger than they had expected. They also got to walk in the rye cover crops and dig up soil to see first-hand what healthy soil looks like, complete with roots and worms. Later, influencers met with a ruminant and human nutritionist and got a crash course on how much care goes into feeding cows and how dairy fuels our bodies. Their next challenge was to make a smoothie using various ingredients to see if they could eat as healthy as



a cow. Dr. Joanne Slavin, a dietitian from the University of Minnesota, was the guest judge and speaker. Afterward, they went to Kiefland Holsteins, saw robotic milkers, and learned how technology is utilized on the farm. As a show herd, they also got to lead a cow on a halter. To say goodbye, the group came

together at a local brewery to ask any final questions and discuss the experience one last time before heading to the airport.

Throughout the immersive experience, facts and research were shared as Midwest Dairy aimed to provide a genuine path toward exploring sustainability. Influencers got to physically see how farmers are stewards of the land, resources, and their cows and that they are committed to providing nutritious, wholesome milk and dairy products to nourish people. This event may have occurred in Minnesota, but all 4,400 Midwest dairy farmers were acknowledged as checkoff dispelled misconceptions about dairy's sustainability across the 10-state region.

The goal of #DairyBootcamp was to tell the story of sustainable dairy farming to millions of people through the social channels of these influencers, like Instagram and YouTube. All content created is approved by checkoff before hitting social media and shines a positive light on the industry and their experience. Midwest Dairy also had two videographers and photographers on site and will have access to all the photos and videos captured to continue telling the story to other consumers on other channels. The influencer participants voiced how surprised they were at the amount of thought that goes into dairy farming and that everything could be reused and recycled. As challenges commenced, they also shared how the daily jobs farmers do to keep their farms running seemed intimidating and scary, but after getting the opportunity to do them themselves, the process was incredibly eye-opening.

“Bringing influencers to a dairy farm for an experience is the easy part. The hard part is bringing the story to life on their channels to help others know and understand how amazing dairy is at fueling the world while caring for the land and animals. We will measure impact over the next few months to ensure we are growing trust with consumers.” Eir Garcia Silva, Vice President, Dairy Experience – Marketing.

Overall, this experience brought dairy to life in a fun and out-of-the-box way and allowed for many farmer-led conversations to happen in 48 hours, putting many misconceptions about the dairy industry to rest. As this experience hits social media channels, we are seeing interest from other social media influencers looking to share the same experience with their followers, an opportunity checkoff hopes to grow in the future!

Checkoff supports WIC with dairy nutrition programming

Healthcare providers, such as pediatricians and pediatric registered dietitians, are a primary audience for sharing dairy resources, serving as trusted advisors to parents. This is why Midwest Dairy partnered with the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) throughout our 10-state region. This partnership enables Checkoff to deliver impactful dairy nutrition information to diverse consumers through this influential program during an important time in their lives. WIC safeguards the health of low-income pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, infants, and children up to age five. This program provides nutritious foods to supplement diets, information on healthy eating, and referrals to healthcare services for those in need. This information is commonly available at county health departments, hospitals, mobile clinics, community centers, schools, public housing sites, and migrant centers/health service facilities.



By targeting healthcare professionals, Midwest Dairy aims to enhance consumer trust by providing science-based educational resources for patient and family education. Below are a few examples of WIC partners across the 10-state region and how Midwest Dairy supported them with science-based information and deliverables in 2023.

10-State Region

Midwest Dairy learned from multiple healthcare providers that parents today are seeking helpful information delivered in more engaging ways than paper handouts. Conversations with WIC clinics throughout the Midwest region revealed that providers struggle to educate parents about why, how, and when to transition their children from whole to skim or 1 percent milk. The American Academy of Pediatrics and Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend transitioning children to lower-fat milk at two years of age, but this can be an adjustment for little tastebuds and a big challenge for parents.

Midwest Dairy provided a solution for WIC providers by developing a fun and educational video to help providers guide parents in transitioning their children to lower-fat milk. Through animations, this video teaches parents how to transition slowly and at their child's pace. It also informs parents that although the fat and calories differ, all milk (including lactose-free) contains the same 13 essential nutrients to nourish their growing child. Providers noted language as a barrier to providing care, so videos were also translated into Spanish.

Midwest Dairy is proud to say that these videos have been adopted by clinics throughout the Midwest Dairy region and shared with the National Dairy Council and all other state and regional dairy organizations for adoption with partners nationwide.

Illinois WIC

Conversations with the Illinois WIC nutrition services coordinator revealed that some Illinois families struggle with knowing how to utilize all the foods that come in their WIC packages. To address this, checkoff collaborated with the American Dairy Association of the Mideast to adapt a resource they created for the West Virginia WIC centers to help Illinois WIC.

The “Perfect Pairings” brochure and poster were ideal for Illinois WIC’s use. These resources help nutrition educators guide families through the foods in the WIC packages and highlight which dairy items and other foods are most appropriate for each age group. Utilizing another state and region checkoff was extremely helpful and allowed us to adapt the document quickly. Illinois WIC also highlighted the diversity of its participants, noting a sizeable Hispanic population. To ensure the resource would be both effective and culturally considerate, it was translated into Spanish. In late April, Illinois WIC hosted a symposium where this new bilingual resource was used as a training tool for 350 WIC nutrition educators. The “Perfect Pairings” resource was also made available in the Illinois WIC warehouse for simple ordering by the over 90 clinics statewide, reaching over 200,000 families in 2023. These resources have been so helpful that the Nebraska WIC centers have adopted them and translated them into additional languages to reach their diverse participants.

Missouri WIC

Midwest Dairy partnered with healthcare professionals at the Betty Jean Kerr People's Health Centers (BJKPHC). This nonprofit organization provides healthcare services to underserved communities in the St. Louis, Missouri, area. The health centers offer a wide range of medical services to individuals and families with limited access to healthcare, including those without insurance or Medicaid coverage. BJKPHC is also known for participating in WIC programming and currently serves over 4,000 area clients monthly.

In 2023, Midwest Dairy was proud to provide nutrition education resources to the healthcare professionals serving this vulnerable population. These resources aided healthcare providers in navigating pediatric challenges such as picky eating, managing lactose intolerance, and transitioning from whole milk to 2 percent milk for infants. Additionally, these resources were translated into multiple languages to ensure that the information reaches the diverse populations that are represented.

Midwest Dairy also partnered with Family Care Health Centers (FCHC) in St. Louis, a community health network center offering comprehensive healthcare services to residents of the St. Louis area. These centers provide medical, dental, and behavioral health services to individuals and families, focusing on providing care to underserved and uninsured populations. Annually, FCHC provides healthcare services to over 9,600 clients. FCHC received four patient education handouts and six patient education videos, all featuring dairy-related nutrition education that included the following topics: lactose intolerance, transitioning from whole to lower-fat milk, gut and immune health, and general nutrition. The Nutrition Team at FCHC was especially excited to receive our video-based materials as they were seeking patient education content for their waiting room.

Lastly, Midwest Dairy partnered with the St. Charles County Public Health Department (SCCPHD), which serves one of the most populous counties in Missouri. SCCPHD is responsible for protecting and improving the health and well-being of its 400,000 residents and provides healthcare services to over 19,200 clients annually. SCCPHD adopted the Milk Transition and the Good Nutrition Made Easy handouts for their clients. The Nutrition & WIC Coordinator at SCCPHD notes the frequent need for education on these topics and how these materials would serve as a reminder of good practices.

Kansas WIC

In 2023, Kansas WIC updated its nutrition education resource listing for local agencies and leaned on Midwest Dairy to update the dairy section and resources. Midwest Dairy also helped them translate the [Making the Move](#) handout into Portuguese to meet client needs after receiving feedback from the Kansas WIC nutrition education committee. Resources were also requested and shared with Children's Mercy Hospital, and the University of Kansas Medical Center registered dietitians.

Oklahoma WIC

Midwest Dairy collaborated with Oklahoma healthcare partners, focusing on pediatric nutrition, to curate a range of contemporary resources, including videos and handouts for healthcare professionals. These valuable materials were distributed throughout 2023 to key entities such as the Tulsa WIC office, and other healthcare networks like the St. Francis Healthcare System, and the Oklahoma State Office of Rural Health.

A noteworthy milestone in the state occurred when the Oklahoma State Office of Rural Health actively promoted Midwest Dairy's "Smart Moo-ve Healthy All Day Long" toolkit, specifically tailored for primary and pediatric care professionals across healthcare facilities.

To better equip healthcare providers in Nebraska with evidence-based information that can serve a diverse audience, Midwest Dairy translated two dairy pairing resources into five different languages. The WIC clinics across Nebraska appreciated and adopted these materials for use with their 35,000 participants. While these resources were created specifically for the WIC benefits package, other healthcare systems across Nebraska also adopted them for use with their pediatric and adult populations. These resources identify the positive impact of providing visuals of how dairy fits within the day and with other food groups for providers and patients. Additionally, Midwest Dairy prioritized that these deliverables be translated into different languages to ensure patients are not only able to receive the information but that they receive the correct information.

Farmers utilize Undeniably Dairy grants in 2023

Undeniably Dairy grants are available to farmers to locally promote dairy's benefits for people, the planet, and local communities. Midwest Dairy proudly offers grants that provide farmers with support to interact and connect positively with their community, especially Generation Z (Gen Z). Undeniably Dairy Grants allow us to bring dairy to unexpected places!

In 2023, 149 grants totaling over \$348,000 were awarded. Midwest Dairy is currently tallying the number of consumers reached through these programs/events, but we are proud to say that over 612,000 people had the opportunity to interact with dairy because of these grants so far. Checkoff is always blown away by the creativity farmers bring to the table when applying for these grants. Below are just a few recipients who promoted dairy in fun and impactful ways.

Minnesota

In 2022, the Eden Valley - Watkins Athletic Program used Undeniably Dairy grant money to promote the benefits of chocolate milk to their junior and senior high school athletes during their summer workout program. In 2023, a farmer used another Undeniably Dairy grant to assist their athletic program again, but this time to provide a bulk milk machine for their student-athletes. The bulk milk machine was put in the school's weight room to always be available for the student-athletes to consume dairy products after their workouts. This grant benefits more than 100 student-athletes weekly, from 7th- 12th grade. The farmer applauded the grant program, saying, "It is easy and rewarding, especially when you get to physically see checkoff dollars making such an impact." The school's athletic director also commented, "The kids love the fresh milk, and it helps get more students into the weight room!"

Illinois

In June 2023, Berning Acres used an Undeniably Dairy grant to host an on-farm farm camp for children ages seven to twelve. Berning Acres, located in Menominee, Illinois, has operated since 1973 and milks over 400 cows. Owners Matt and Natalie often open their farm for various activities. At the Farm Camp, kids could explore the inner workings of a farm by participating in farm chores, learning how to milk a cow, handle farm animals, and bottle-feed a calf. Kids could explore the parlor, interact with the technology behind automatic calf feeders, and even ride a pony! The group also enjoyed dairy snacks throughout the day.



This marks Berning Acres' third year hosting the Farm Camp, and kids are enthusiastic to participate in a small piece of farm life. In addition to Farm Camp, Berning Acres hosts other events on the farm tailored to different age groups. From "Night on the Farm: Cows, Beers, and Cheese Curds" to "Day at the Farm: Picnic and Play," there is something for everyone.

South Dakota

Dairy Fest is an annual event coordinated by the Dairy Fest Steering Committee, comprised of dairy farmers, dairy industry leaders, and academic members that aim to bring the community together through conversation and learning opportunities about the dairy industry. The festival's mission is to offer a free, family-friendly event that engages consumers about the dairy industry from farm to table, focusing on sustainability and the nutritional value of dairy products. In 2023, Dairy Fest used an Undeniably Dairy grant to help fund the event.

Many events are offered throughout the festival. It kicked off with the Got Milk Gala, allowing influential people in the community to interact with dairy producers and dairy industry representatives, learn about the dairy industry, and enjoy a delicious dairy-based meal. The Picowsca art contest is also on the agenda and enables students from third grade through college to showcase on canvas how they view the dairy industry outside their backdoor. The festival's final day features the Dairy Fest Farm Tour and Dairy Plant Tour. Additionally, tours at a locally owned dairy farm allow consumers to learn first-hand how milk is produced and harvested. Lastly, participants were given a tour of the local South Dakota State University Davis Dairy Plant to learn how milk is turned into dairy products such as ice cream, cheese, butter, yogurt, and more. All of these events featured locally made dairy products and were facilitated by more than 40 dairy volunteers, including producers, students, dairy ambassadors, academic and industry professionals, and academia, helping people put a face to the entire industry.

Iowa

At the Shelby County Fair, over 10,000 consumers had the opportunity to interact with an expanded "Little Hands on the Farm" exhibit, made possible by an Undeniably Dairy grant awarded to the Shelby County Fair Board. This hands-on, educational-based agricultural exhibit focused on young families and children. With the grant money received, they enhanced the learning experience for kids by incorporating a mechanical dairy cow along with several flip-ups/questionnaires providing valuable learning points and information about the dairy industry. This exhibit emphasized the importance of dairy products and that their consumption is vital to everyone's well-being. Their "Little Hands on the Farm" exhibit engaged kids who have no idea where their food comes from through educational programs and exhibits. The organizers reported outstanding attendance at the 2023 exhibit and continue to hear positive comments from attendees. They hope to grow the exhibit more in years to come.

North Dakota

The Legendairy event is hosted every two years at VanBedaf farm. This farm used an Undeniably Dairy grant to host a farm tour and open house event that welcomed over 900 people from the local community and across the state to enjoy a working farm. The event featured an informative farm tour that included refurbished tractors pulling participants through the barns and around the farm, as they learned about different areas of a farm and had their questions about the dairy industry answered.

Several farm employees served as tour guides, using their industry knowledge to connect with participants. These tour guides included other dairy farmers, farm nutritionists, feed reps, and the farm family themselves. Educational signage filled the farm, and participants took home cow hats, coloring books, and other materials displaying the Undeniably Dairy brand.

Ozark

The 14th Annual Celebration of Unity event, held in early July at Hartville City Park in Missouri, reached over 3,500 consumers. This community draws people from more than 60 miles away, making it an excellent opportunity for an Undeniably Dairy grant to connect dairy to a broad audience. The event was free thanks to local community groups who donated their time and funds to put the event on. There were many dairy touchpoints, including live cows brought by the local FFA for the community to interact with and a fiberglass cow provided by the local Farm Bureau group, making for great photo opportunities. New this year was a mechanical milking cow. It was a great experience for kids of all ages to learn about the milking process and get to milk by hand. Food was also served, including hamburgers, hotdogs, pulled pork, and lots of ice cream. The serving line for the ice cream was long and a big hit! The focus was on all things dairy, whether it is something to eat, recipes to try at home, or information about dairy farming and dairy foods, proving dairy was a big part of the community event.

MoKan

Thanks to an Undeniably Dairy grant, Rottinghaus Holstein Farm shared sustainability efforts with students of all ages. The Earth Day Farm Field Trip was a fun success, consisting of two sessions: a farm tour and education stations in the shop. Around 50 students and their parents learned about on-farm processes, specifically how farmers and cows recycle nutrients. Students were from the local private school with parent chaperones and teachers present, many of whom were removed from the dairy and agriculture industries. Kids were excited to see how cows turn food waste into milk humans can consume. Many students had family members who worked at the local cabinet factory, where the farm receives wood shavings for animal bedding—a fun connection for all. At the education stations, students had hands-on experiences with nutrient recycling, such as planting a seed into a composted cow manure pot and playing with the different feed byproducts used on the farm. Undeniably, Dairy graphics and informational signs were placed at the stations for parents to read to the students. Students also had fun petting a baby calf and learning about calf welfare. At the end of the event, participants received an Undeniably Dairy bag with Undeniably Dairy goodies and their planted cow pot to take home.

Nebraska

The Ag in the Classroom program provides student teachers from seven colleges across fifteen courses in Nebraska with hands-on and engaging activities that integrate agriculture into lessons that support Nebraska State Educational Standards in language arts, math, social studies, and science. These teachers will reach thousands of students throughout their careers, and these workshops provide a foundation for building their resource portfolio. Each year, the program delivers dairy messaging to over 200 Generation Z students. Many of these students have no connection to the farm. Students learn about dairy through hands-on activities showcasing milk's journey with lessons highlighting dairy-specific content from the National Agriculture in the Classroom Curriculum Matrix. This messaging helps the teachers learn and form their own opinions about how dairy farming is good for people, the planet, and communities and sets the framework for the messages they will share with their future students. Undeniably, Dairy grants support funding content for these future teachers, and Midwest Dairy provides most of the resources to ensure science-based dairy content is shared with students.

STEM continued to build in 2023 with a positive outlook in 2024

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) programming continues to be a significant focus of dairy checkoffs and is highly valued by Midwest Dairy as we continue to meet educators with science-based dairy education. We know that to maintain and grow dairy consumption with youth, we need an industry-wide strategy for securing dairy's role in school education settings over the next decade. With this knowledge, the dairy federation's overarching goal is to ensure all high school graduates have a sufficient understanding of science and engineering. This foundation will enable students to engage in public discussion on science-related issues, be careful consumers of scientific and technical information, and pursue their chosen careers.

The dairy checkoff is committed to this new approach in building trust with youth by helping high school curriculum writers across the country incorporate accurate science about dairy farming. Midwest Dairy is partnering with state leaders to provide professional development to high school science educators and create high-quality instructional materials.

To support these efforts, in 2023, multiple Midwest Dairy staff attended the National Conference of Science Education in Kansas City, Missouri. This event is described as an inspirational learning space connecting the nation's best and most engaging professionals that offers practices and strategies to help science educators shape the future of their work. There were multiple keynote speakers, panels, sessions, courses, and workshops for attendees to experience at the event. It was a space for Midwest Dairy to have meaningful conversations with state science leaders, where we uncovered dairy-focused needs and opportunities for educators.

Midwest Dairy also hosted listening sessions with state leaders to discuss the findings of the Next Gen Science Standards Landscape Analysis and Opportunities, funded by dairy checkoff. During these sessions, 33 state leaders learned why dairy is interested in science education, critical findings from the recent report, and participated in breakouts to share more about needs in their state. These listening sessions fostered key relationships, paving the way for opportunities in 2024.

Midwest Dairy's efforts in 2023 to learn and build relationships within this sector will significantly impact future developments in 2024. Research shows that Generation Z truly cares about where their food comes from and has questions. In fact, 82 percent of youth find it challenging to know if their food choices are environmentally friendly, and 40 percent of youth admit to reading or talking with others about how food is grown, raised, or produced at least monthly. That's why, when working together, checkoff can partner with science leaders in our states to help students learn about where their food comes from within their already mandatory science curriculum.

Offering rural healthcare providers resources

Midwest Dairy was proud to offer a new essential resource for rural healthcare providers in the Fall of 2023. Rural health providers understand the importance of nutrition in the rural health landscape, but they often lack the resources and time to address this issue alone. To support this need, Midwest Dairy launched the Smart Moo-ve Healthy All Day Long health initiative to assist with this challenge and help bridge the nutrition gap in rural communities.



This free and easy-to-use downloadable toolkit was developed with healthcare partners for National Rural Health Day and is tailored for primary and pediatric care professionals. The toolkit helps these pediatric care professionals discuss the importance of nutrition – including dairy – with their patients and communities. It features the USDA MyPlate nutrition guidelines and dairy’s essential role in childhood growth and development. This toolkit includes patient handouts, waiting room visuals, posters, and TV monitor slides to help educate families on dairy’s nutritional value during their doctor’s office visits. Additionally, the toolkit contains children’s entertainment tools such as a storybook, activity pages, and character trading cards that make dairy nutrition fun to learn about.

The resources were shared with key stakeholders such as state offices of rural health, rural healthcare organizations, WIC, Extension programs, pediatric professional organizations, and others serving rural areas within our 10-state region.

Farmers were encouraged to amplify this effort by sharing the toolkit with their own local healthcare providers as well. A significant milestone for the project was achieved when the nation’s leading rural health information source, the Rural Health Information Hub, promoted the toolkit in their November newsletter and posted a link to it in their website’s resources section. This extended the toolkit’s reach and credibility and added visibility to rural communities nationwide.

Connecting positive dairy nutrition messages with animated characters children love is just a one-way checkoff in bringing dairy nutrition to parents and children, and this toolkit is complete with children’s entertainment tools such as a storybook, activity pages, and character trading cards. This comprehensive toolkit serves as an invaluable resource to educate families about nourishing brains, bones, and bodies with an emphasis on dairy nutrition. Midwest Dairy aims to continue offering this toolkit to healthcare providers in the future.

Utilizing university campuses to share dairy's farm-to-table story

College campuses are full of Generation Z (Gen Z) students, which research shows are the least trusting consumer segment. Midwest Dairy knows a positive consumer perception of dairy leads to increased sales, making college campuses a great place to engage Gen Z shoppers. Checkoff works with various universities to share dairy's farm-to-table story in out-of-the-box places. University athletics, classrooms, and events around campus all bring large groups of people together, allowing checkoff to shine a positive spotlight on the dairy industry. Reaching this large consumer base with a fun experience helps bring dairy to life beyond the grocery store while engaging with consumers about important topics and giving them a taste of the dairy products they love. Learn more about our university partnerships below across the 10-state region.

Iowa State University

Midwest Dairy partnered with Iowa State University (ISU) AfterDark to serve over 500 Iowa State students an excellent dairy experience. ISU AfterDark is a student-run organization that plans three late-night activities on campus each semester.

Midwest Dairy was eager to offer the pop-up milk and cereal bar to engage with students. Through this activation, checkoff gave out over 500 Undeniably dairy-branded cups of nostalgic cereal and milk in under two hours. ISU students eagerly lined up at the Memorial Union to enjoy the milk and cereal bar, and many even posted their experience on social media while recruiting their peers to attend. We worked with a vendor to design an Undeniably Dairy-themed setup showcasing dairy's role in sustainable nutrition. Their Gen Z staff provided an Undeniably Dairy experience, mixing up a fun combination of milk and cereal. In addition, Dairy Science Club volunteers engaged with the students, answering questions about responsible dairy production and refueling with dairy.



Minnesota State University - Mankato

As part of Minnesota State University-Mankato's school year kickoff event, Midwest Dairy held its first in-person activation for the "Reset Yourself with Dairy" Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MNSCU) campaign. This campaign is concentrated within the MNSCU system to reach the adult Gen Z audience.

The experience paired sustainability and dairy messaging with delicious dairy recipes, including ham and pita pockets, fruit smoothies, overnight oats, and grilled cheese sandwiches. Their foodservice program prepared these recipes, and foodservice staff coordinated with Midwest Dairy on logistical support. Checkoff's booth was designed to attract and hold students' attention while volunteers and staff engaged them in meaningful conversations about dairy. Mini magazines, available at the booth, included further dairy messaging and the recipes for the food served. The line for the booth was often 30-50 students deep.

Kansas State University

Midwest Dairy partnered with Kansas State University (K-State) Bakery Science Dairy Science Clubs and Call Hall Dairy Bar to remind students that dairy is “Too Good to Forget.” During two afternoons, students enjoyed whole and 2% milk from Call Hall Dairy Bar with lactose-free milk available by request. The Bakery Science Club baked 800 chocolate chip cookies to complete the nostalgic dairy pairing. Student members of the clubs staffed the tables, encouraging peers to stop, enjoy an afternoon snack, and share how students could give back to Wildcats facing food insecurity.

To encourage community outreach, the clubs promoted monetary donations to K-State’s food pantry, Cats’ Cupboard. Midwest Dairy created a limited quantity, color-changing cup to encourage donations for the occasion. For each minimum \$1 donation to Cats’ Cupboard, students could upgrade their dunk to help others. Cats’ Cupboard received more than \$100 in donations to purchase dairy products over the holiday season. In 2023, Cats’ Cupboard expanded from 800 to 8,000 square feet to a newly renovated building with increased storage capacity, including walk-in and reach-in coolers and freezers. According to Cats’ Cupboard, milk, cheese, and yogurt are frequently requested items by pantry visitors.

South Dakota State University

New in 2023, Midwest Dairy initiated a partnership with the South Dakota State University (SDSU) Miller Wellness Center, which hosts health-minded college students, offering them a wide variety of fitness opportunities. This partnership allowed their registered dietitian and interns to provide five dairy sampling experiences on-site during the spring semester, each focusing on a different dairy product and recipe. For example, one month focused on Greek yogurt and featured parfaits. The Wellness Center hosts over 2,000 guests daily, largely college-age students and 100-200 students typically engage with the two-hour sampling event. The partnership also included several signage opportunities throughout the building and monthly social media posts reaching almost 5,000 followers.

In addition, Midwest Dairy consistently partners with the SDSU men’s basketball team for the annual Dairy Drive game. This year, to better engage Gen Z, Midwest Dairy partnered directly with student-athlete Charlie Easley to talk about why he refuels with chocolate milk in a pre-recorded radio interview that aired at halftime of the game and also aired on Jackrabbit All Access. He shared his message on social media, reaching close to 5,000 followers. Around 1,800 attendees at the live game were presented with nutrition and sustainability messaging. In addition, the South Dakota Dairy Ambassadors handed out ice cream coupons at the student entrance of the Dairy Drive game and had several ice cream cut-outs that students could pose for photos with as they entered the game.

The College World Series

For the third year, Midwest Dairy had an onsite presence in the Omaha Baseball Village venue of the Men’s College World Series. Checkoff engaged with consumers through various activities to learn and enjoy dairy foods at the Undeniably Dairy booth.



Over 300,000 attendees from across the country make their way to Omaha, Nebraska, each June to cheer on the best of the best baseball teams during the Men's College World Series. This large and diverse audience offers Midwest Dairy a significant opportunity to connect with people of all ages.

The Undeniably Dairy booth offered many opportunities for baseball fans to experience dairy in a fun and interactive way. Checkoff partnered with the local YMCA to draw in the Gen Z crowd by providing gaming systems allowing consumers to play esports games while fueling with dairy samples. Visitors could spin the dairy trivia wheel or drop a Plinko chip to answer dairy nutrition and sustainability questions for a prize. Attendees also enjoyed over 1,200 chocolate milk pints, 2,500 cheese sticks, and 750 lactose-free milk beverage samples. On the weekends, two very popular guests joined the booth, "Babe" and "Ruth." The two dairy calves allowed baseball fans to interact with them and a dairy farmer to answer any questions that arose. Omaha Baseball Village shared a photo of the calves with their "Hero" for the day with their followers. Midwest Dairy also partnered with Nelson Produce Farm, who joined to hand out produce samples in the booth and promoted the event on their social platforms. Before the event, a Pure Nebraska news segment promoting the dairy experience aired to over 11,500 viewers and 36,500 Facebook followers.

Checkoff continues to see the benefits of supporting gamers with dairy content

Research shows that 96 percent of Generation Z (Gen Z) enjoy video games and identify as gamers, motivating Midwest Dairy to continue finding ways to grow trust with gaming partners to reach these Gen Z consumers. Gamers average around 11 hours a week playing and interacting with online games, and 44 percent say they have made a purchase decision based on a recommendation from a social influencer, like a gamer. In 2023, Midwest Dairy continued to prioritize bringing dairy to unexpected places by capitalizing on gaming opportunities across the 10-state region.

Checkoff partnered with Version1 again this year. Last year, the “Cooking with Comm” content series was launched and continued with two new episodes around the holidays (eggnog and charcuterie). In the summer of 2023, a new series called “V1DA with KRISSY” was created, where viewers get to know gamers inside and outside the game in a casual conversation setting. The first episode features ATTACH, a Version 1 Call of Duty player, while another episode introduces NOIA, a highly successful Valorant player. Undeniably Dairy was the featured sponsor, selecting topics about mental and physical wellness during the episodes. The episodes feature ads connecting Gen Z to dairy. The new series has reached over 318,046 consumers through Version1’s YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, X, and Facebook channels.

Iowa

The Iowa High School Esports Association (IAHSEA) was another key partner during their 2023 Fall State Showdown. Over 800 gamers gathered to compete during the three-day tournament, and over 12,000 viewers tuned in to watch via livestreams. Through this partnership, Midwest Dairy elevated players’ experience with dairy-focused messaging. “Reset Yourself with Dairy” commercials played during live streams alongside a video to promote Zany Ziplines, a new Fortnite game concept supported by MilkPEP.



IAHSEA also had a goal to bring more health initiatives and messaging to players. During the tournament, they provided a healthy snack station, including milk, yogurt, cheese, and various fruits. Players and coaches enjoyed having healthy snack options available to grab between games. After a win, all champion teams were photographed doing a milk cheers. In three short years, they have grown from five to over 90 schools participating in state competitions. For many players, this is their first time participating in extracurricular activities, and they enjoyed the engagement and experience.

Nebraska

Nebraska School eSports Association (NSeSA) was another successful partner with checkoff, working with them to bring dairy to life at their Spring State Tournament. Chocolate milk, cheese sticks, and

Undeniably Dairy swag were given to the 350 players, coaches, and audience in attendance. Additionally, over 1,250 high school students from across the state streamed the two-day championship online. Reset

Yourself with Dairy commercials were played, and Fuel Your Fun dairy messaging was woven into daily announcements to keep dairy in mind. Champions were interviewed at the Undeniably Dairy desk, which concluded with a chocolate milk chug and cheers. The NSeSA staff appreciated Midwest Dairy for "pushing the boundaries of their normal sponsorships" to help bring these athletes a more engaging, interactive, and healthy experience.

Throughout 2023, Midwest Dairy also partnered with the YMCA esports program as it got off the ground and expanded in Omaha, Nebraska. During this six weeks program, the YMCA added important health and nutrition curriculum from the Fuel Up program, including the following themes: Connecting the Mind & Body, Relaxation Plan, Nourishing the Mind, Wellness Facts, Create Your Own Plate, and Design Your Own Game Plan. Esports instructors focused on teaching kids the importance of a healthy mind, body, and spirit, focusing on hydration and a well-balanced diet to optimize their ability to play and live well. The YMCA engaged 108 kids in esports and held three youth sports tournaments. In addition, 17,620 tournament emails were opened promoting the tournaments. The YMCA received feedback about how students benefited from and enjoyed the healthy recipe inclusion and/or dairy products.

Kansas

The collaborations continued as checkoff also brought different partners together to drive dairy demand by working with two professional iRacing drivers who went head-to-head to see who could create the best-tasting smoothie. Midwest Dairy collaborated with the Kansas City Pioneers and Price Chopper Enterprises to share with Gen Z gamers the benefits of fueling their fun with dairy. The Pioneers' smoothie competition reached Gen Z via X and Instagram, generating over 15,903 impressions and 2,514 video views. Recognizing smoothies as a popular healthy go-to item, Price Chopper Enterprises also shared the video and the winning smoothie recipe on their social channels. The recipe will be housed with other Undeniably Dairy delicious recipes on the Price Chopper website.

Midwest Dairy is committed to engaging with Gen Z youth through diverse experiences and partnerships to share the sustainable nutrition story of dairy. Dairy products can provide huge nutritional value in these gamers' lifestyles, and checkoff is dedicated to sharing those benefits.

Partnering with school associations to reach Gen Z

Engaging the next generation of influential buyers is crucial for the industry's success. Checkoff is committed to ensuring the longevity of dairy demand in the marketplace. Generation Z (Gen Z) is made up of current 11 to 26-year-olds. Research shows dairy consumption declines at this age, prompting Midwest Dairy to target them through partnerships with dairy outside the classroom.

When thinking of partners to work with, Midwest Dairy identified school associations as an effective channel to meet Gen Z students where they are. This approach allows checkoff to work with influential leaders the kids already respect and are comfortable with. Midwest Dairy's continued relationship with the Illinois High School Association (IHSA) is a great example of this type of partnership. In 2023, Midwest Dairy partnered with IHSA and participated in the first Student Leadership Conference since 2020. Over 600 student leaders and 100 adult chaperones from across Illinois attended the half-day conference in East Peoria, which was planned and executed by the students.



Midwest Dairy provided a nostalgic milk and cereal bar for participants where they were able to enjoy their favorite cereal paired with regular or lactose-free milk. Messaging reminded students that milk is vital to a healthy diet and even rehydrates better than water. Over 500 servings of milk and cereal were served at this event. Dairy Farmer Jenna Kilgus spoke in the open session, discussing dairy farming and sustainability with attendees. Katie Knappenberger, Sports Nutritionist for Northwestern University, also spoke to the adult chaperones about leading the students and themselves to make healthy food choices by discussing dairy's role and sharing lactose-free and low-in-lactose options for consumption. Lastly, students played dairy trivia and won dairy-related charms to wear on their Crocs.

In 2023, Midwest Dairy also formed a new partnership with the Minnesota State High Schools League (MSHSL) to build trust with Gen Z High school youth, parents, and coaches. The partnership began with a farm tour in Rogers, Minnesota, for students from the newly formed Student Advisory and Leadership Group (SALT) and two Associate Directors of the Scherber Morning Star Dairy. During the tour, the students experienced animal care and sustainability practices used on a farm. They got a first-hand look at the fascinating technology used on the farm, including robotic milkers, manure collectors, and a robotic feeder named "Alice." Students also enjoyed brainstorming a name for a new calf while interacting with farmer Quinci Scherber. In the post-survey, many students commented on how technology plays an important role on the farm and were impressed with how well the cows were being treated. Students took pictures and shared their experiences on their new Instagram channel @MSHSL_SALT.

Along with this partnership, Midwest Dairy hosted 60 coaches from around the state at TCO Stadium for summer coach certification training, fulfilling the final obligation of the Vikings' FUTP60 contract. We

know coaches are an important source of information for students. By providing coaches tools that showcase the nutritional benefits of dairy, we know it will reach students from an already trusted source. Remi Famodu, RD, Vikings Dietitian, provided a Nutrition 101 training at the event that was recorded and made available to over 1,500 coaches statewide to access, along with other nutrition resources for them to use afterward. This partnership will last through June 2024 and will continue to offer opportunities to engage with students, parents, and coaches to build trust in dairy in Minnesota.

Another partner association includes the Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union (IGHSAU). In 2023, Midwest Dairy brought dairy sustainability and animal care to life through a farm tour with their Student Advisory Committee (SAC). The committee experienced a day in the life of a dairy cow - from milking to resting, and explored the different technologies used to ensure cows are happy and healthy while on the farm. After the tour, the SAC created a reel they posted on the IGHSAU Instagram page to share what they learned with their peer followers.

Midwest Dairy also partnered with the Nebraska Coaches Association in 2023, reaching 4,300 athletic coaches across the state. Checkoff shared nutrition information about dairy's role in refueling before and after exercise with this group of middle and high school coaches. Midwest Dairy teamed up with Registered Dietitian Angie Asch with Eleat Sports Nutrition in Nebraska to develop infographics and articles inspiring coaches and young athletes to fuel with dairy pre-workout, post-workout, on the road, and on and off the field. The content was well received, with an average newsletter open rate of 67.8 percent.

During the 2023-24 school year, checkoff also provided nutrition information to North Dakota coaches to help their middle and high-school-age students perform their best. The resources from the above Nebraska partnership were shared with the North Dakota High School Coaches Association (NDHSCA) and published in the Dakota Coach electronic newsletter. The Fall issue featured information on pre-workout nutrition and provided practical information on what to eat before practice. The Winter issue featured tips for eating healthy while traveling to and from a sporting event. Over 1,500 coaches and athletic trainers are members of the NDHSCA and receive the Dakota Coach newsletter. The nutrition information was also published in the South Dakota and Nebraska High School Coaches publications.

Lastly, Midwest Dairy successfully partnered with the South Dakota Coaches Association and Athletic Directors. This partnership reached about 2,000 coaches and athletic directors across the state via email, newsletters, and social media. Midwest Dairy again used Nebraska's Registered Dietitian Angie Asch's infographics and articles to build and promote dairy messaging.

Connecting with outstanding young people through these school associations has effectively delivered dairy messaging to Gen Z. Checkoff works hard to find the right partner who can help us better connect with future dairy purchasers.

Kansas dairy farm featured in PBS-distributed program, tasteMAKERS

The dairy checkoff is eager for the viewers to learn from a Midwest dairy farmer who was featured on a popular public television program. Emmy Award-winning producer and host Catherine Neville recently featured Hildebrand Farms Dairy's compelling story and approached Midwest Dairy to partner on the program tasteMAKERS. This popular program explores the American craft food movement, specifically emphasizing entrepreneurs who are creating, growing, and giving back to their communities, all while making something delicious. American Public Television is known for its educational and commercial-free television programming, making it an outstanding opportunity to deliver dairy's story to millions of people.



Released this fall, season three episode two, tasteMAKERS, highlighted Hildebrand Farms Dairy from Junction City, Kansas. Neville sat down with fourth-generation farmer Melissa Hildebrand Reed to see first-hand how cows and land are cared for and how dairy products are used by local businesses. Neville then wrapped up the episode back in her kitchen, showing viewers how to make lasagna with a dairy-rich Mornay sauce. The episode is available to watch on YouTube and the tasteMAKERS's website.

tasteMAKERS is distributed through American Public Television, which is then picked up by PBS member stations nationwide. As of January 6, 2024, the third season of tasteMAKERS has aired across 352 PBS member stations. This coverage represents 45 U.S. states, including all 10 states from Midwest Dairy's region. The demographics of these households represent approximately 63.7 million adults 18-34 years, 55 million adults 35-49 years, and 108 million adults 50+.

Midwest Dairy leveraged video captured in the episode and created digital ads targeted to Gen Z and millennial audiences to boost viewership with this critical audience. A three-week campaign delivered 15-second video ads through tasteMAKERS' Instagram and YouTube channels focusing on three different themes: sustainability, animal care, and nostalgic milk content.

Public television stations determine their programming schedules individually, so check your local station for air dates and times through January. tasteMAKERS is also available through the PBS app, on PBS.org, and airs on Create.

Partnering with Ag Coalitions to reach more consumers

Midwest Dairy partners with Ag Coalitions across the 10-state region to connect with consumers through a trusted voice. These coalitions celebrate farm families and help consumers find the information and experiences they need to make informed food choices for their own families. Midwest Dairy had successful partnerships with many of these groups throughout 2023.

Illinois Farm Families

Midwest Dairy partnered with the Illinois Farm Families (IFF) coalition throughout 2023 on many different initiatives. Notably, the Influence Farm Fest Campaign, We Are the 69 Super Bowl premiere, and Casey's promotion, the We Are the 69 campaign, were standouts. During the Influencer Farm Fest campaign, five Chicago-based social media influencers visited Lenkaitis Holsteins dairy farm to get an on-farm experience. While on the farm, the group shared over 90 different social media posts and stories, allowing their followers to see their experience. The IFF also partnered with Casey's to promote the We are the 96 campaign during the fall of 2023. Fliers featuring the "We are the 96" message - that 96 percent of Illinois farms are family-owned and operated - were distributed to the more than 500 Casey's stores in Illinois. One of the ten featured Illinois farm families was the Leanne Casner family of Clavin Dairy Farm, located in South Central Illinois. This campaign aimed to showcase local families and the farmers' love for their jobs and lifestyles. Midwest Dairy supported this campaign by helping to connect them with the dairy farmer featured and amplifying their efforts to help raise awareness.



Iowa Food and Family Project

As an Iowa Food and Family Project partner, Midwest Dairy was invited to participate in a National Agriculture Week celebration during an Iowa Wolves G-league NBA game. Midwest Dairy ambassadors attended the game, engaging fans with a dairy trivia spin wheel and handing out cow hats and recipe/coloring books to young fans. In addition to fan engagement, a dairy nutrition sustainability video was showcased before the game, and dairy trivia questions were shared during game breaks. Iowa agriculture was highlighted throughout the game across the high-energy Wells Fargo Arena!

Kansas Farm Food Connection

Working with the Kansas Farm Food Connection (KFFC) has yielded positive results as checkoff saw significant traffic to its online platforms, which frequently feature dairy content. In 2023, a top-viewed article on the KFFC website explained the difference between beef and dairy cattle. The profile about Heim Dairy, located in Easton, Kansas, is also a top-rated story on the website. The group further allocated resources to paid search ads and email marketing to reach people interested in recipes and seasonal article topics. This effort included an article with video instructions for three easy air fryer

recipes featuring different dairy products. Research informed KFFC that air fryer recipes aligned with Generation Z consumers looking for easy meal ideas.

Missouri Farmers Care

In 2023, agriculture was front and center on Friday nights at Busch Stadium, home of the MLB's St. Louis Cardinals, thanks to Missouri Farmers Care (MFC). Because of this partnership, dairy and other commodity groups were showcased to baseball fans all season long. One game stood out to fans the most in early June as we celebrated Dairy Night at the stadium with 43,238 fans in attendance.

To kick off the night, 30 volunteers, including 15 dairy farmers, engaged in conversations at the MFC booth experience at Ford Plaza. Dairy Night was interactive for fans, offering free digital photo souvenirs, tic-tac-toe trivia with prizes, a photo with cow mascot Sweet Bessie, farm visits with virtual reality goggles, and a Total Mixed Ration display explaining what cows eat. Before the game, the Cardinals debuted a farm video with dairy farmer Alfred Brandt and St. Louis Cardinal mascot Fred Bird. Friday games also feature "Race to the Plate," when "Farm Team" mascots, including Sweet Bessie, were cheered on as they raced the bases. The MFC and Cardinals partnership also reached consumers through 30-second radio ads, GameDay Magazine print ads, Cardinals scoresheet ad, and a growth poster giveaway for 10,000 youth.



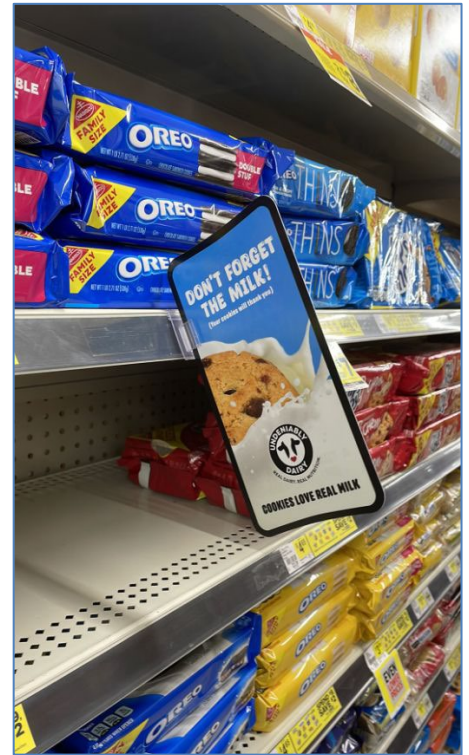
Sales

Checkoff welcomed a new partner in 2023, Dollar General

Midwest Dairy connected with shoppers as checkoff promoted fluid milk through a new 2023 sales partner, Dollar General. Dollar General is the number two grocery destination in the U.S., behind only Walmart, and has a national footprint of over 19,000 stores in 47 states. Seventy-five percent of Americans live within five miles of a Dollar General location, making this new partnership an exciting one!

Inflationary economic conditions continue to change how consumers shop. Recent studies show that high prices in the supermarket aisles for basic food items like eggs, milk, and butter have driven more shoppers to seek bargains at dollar stores. This partnership with Dollar General will allow checkoff to meet consumers where they are: the dollar store channel.

The partnership increased awareness and sales of fluid milk through strategically placed in-store signs during the holiday season and into the new year. These signs focused on affordable nutrition by promoting milk as a good value, using the new Undeniably Dairy tagline “Real Milk. Real Nutrition.” Signage also promoted pairing milk with other popular snacks, like cookies.



This in-store signage helped shoppers navigate aisle to aisle with the goal of influencing their purchase decisions during repeated shelf trips. Customers interacted with dairy promotions at different checkpoints throughout the store, including blade signs at the dairy case and in the cookie aisle.

This effort began as a joint program with Midwest Dairy and the United Dairy Industry of Michigan (UDIM) but grew as other dairy checkoffs joined. After Midwest Dairy and UDIM initiated the project, other state and regional checkoff organizations were invited to join the campaign to grow dairy's footprint. There were 2,369 stores participating throughout the Midwest Dairy 10-state region, as well as 1,930 in American Dairy Association Northeast (East Coast), 584 in UDIM, 534 in Indiana, 1,041 in American Dairy Association Northeast (Ohio/WV), 1,515 in DairyMax, and 1,595 in The Dairy Alliance (GA/TN). Not only is checkoff bringing the farmer's voice to the marketplace, but we are also listening! Dollar General has been a target for Midwest Dairy farmers, and in 2023, checkoff is proud to have gained collaboration with the chain. Dollar General is our first partner in this type of retail signage campaign, and one checkoff is confident in as we continue to increase dairy sales.

Working towards menu innovation with Freddy's Frozen Custard and Steakburgers

Midwest Dairy partnered with Freddy's Frozen Custard and Steakburgers (Freddy's) to promote different dairy-based limited-time offer (LTO) programs in their restaurants throughout 2023. Together, we created impactful promotions to expand the chain's audience and satisfy their appetite for new flavors and products. Freddy's is a 450-unit quick-service restaurant chain headquartered in Wichita, KS, with most of their locations in the Midwest Dairy region.

During the June Dairy Month promotion, three dairy-based items were featured, showcasing the delicious and fresh dairy products produced locally by dairy farmers. Promoted products included an LTO BBQ Double Bacon Cheeseburger combo with Cheese Curds and an LTO key lime pie flavored Frozen Custard Concrete. The program was a multi-media effort featuring digital advertising, select market TV/cable ads, sponsored ads, and extensive in-store point-of-sale promotion. The program resulted in incremental unit sales of more than 12 percent system-wide. The promotion reached over six million consumers across 34 different states.

In the fall of 2023, checkoff worked with Freddy's on another promotion. This time, Midwest Dairy partnered with Freddy's to develop and promote a Grilled Cheese Steakburger paired with a Pumpkin Pie Concrete and Shake. These two exciting menu innovations supported an LTO promotion with Freddy's, utilizing the Undeniably Dairy logo.

The Steakburger featured two pieces of buttered Texas toast, a steakburger patty, two slices of American cheese, two slices of Swiss cheese, and a creamy tomato spread. The taste was a comfort food throwback to grilled cheese and tomato soup, and the Pumpkin Pie Concrete combined fall flavors with Freddy's Frozen custard.

The campaign ran from September 1 to October 31, 2023. Midwest Dairy provided promotional support through digital and printed ads, in-store point-of-purchase promotion, email campaigns, social media ads, and influencer engagement. In addition, the campaign ran as a featured product on the Freddy's Rewards app. The campaign resulted in the best-performing new product launch and limited-time offer of the year for Freddy's. The campaign reached 1.5 million people and generated an incremental 2.2 million pounds of dairy volume. The media exposure and customer feedback were particularly strong for the Grilled Cheese Steakburger as it was the single best-selling item of any promotion cycle at Freddy's in 2023.

In addition to highlighting dairy products and creating promotional deals for Freddy's menus, Midwest Dairy also provides consumer insights on menu trends and flavors. Our partners receive a comprehensive package when they work with checkoff, as we provide more than funding to better connect with consumers in every way possible. With checkoff's resources and Freddy's delicious menu, Midwest Dairy is eager to continue to connect delicious dairy products to consumers.



Utilizing dairy voices in partner retail campaigns

Checkoff consumer research suggests that most consumers in the 10-state region trust dairy farmers and look to them to help understand on-farm sustainability and animal welfare practices. Midwest Dairy takes pride in connecting local farmers with partners who help do just that. Uplifting dairy farmer voices through retail partners' promotions can showcase how dairy is produced responsibly and locally to consumers. The promotions promote dairy sales and give the consumer a better connection to local farmers.

Midwest Dairy partnered with Cub Foods on a unique promotion designed to keep dairy products in front of their shoppers both in-store and online, featuring an expert's voice. Cub Foods is a grocery chain based in Stillwater, Minnesota, with 106 retail locations in Minnesota and Illinois.

Together, checkoff and Cub wanted to build trust in dairy through a campaign utilizing a local farmer's voice that could uniquely connect with shoppers. This unique voice was Kennedy Youngren, a dietitian, mom, and fourth-generation dairy farmer from central Minnesota. Besides being a proud Minnesota native herself, Kennedy's unique background as both mom and dietitian, combined with her strong dairy farm roots, made her a highly credible source to represent the dairy industry and educate about nutrition. Cub understands the value of a local farmer's voice and was eager to collaborate with Midwest Dairy on this new campaign that would eventually be called "Farmer of Cub."



Beginning in August of 2023 and throughout the remainder of the year, Youngren was featured as the Farmer of Cub, offering fresh recipes, nutrition tips, and a behind-the-scenes view of a working dairy farm shared through in-store marketing, email marketing, and social media posts. These posts have reached over half a million consumers.

Another partner that highlighted the unique voice of local farmers was Runza National (Runza). This unique food service partnership featured the Thieles, a multi-generation dairy farm family from Clearwater, Nebraska, during a Dessert Time program. For this campaign, Runza produced customized in-store point-of-purchase materials, social media posts, and product shots that showcased the farm and family. Runza is an 88-unit quick-service restaurant operator with locations in Nebraska, Iowa, Colorado, Kansas, and Missouri.

The campaign goal was to create more visibility of the role dairy farmers have in producing dairy products responsibly and locally to the customers. The Dessert Time program ran from July 1 to September 30 and featured items such as Runza Soft Serve Cones, Cups, Sundaes, and Chocolate Chip Cookie Ice Cream Sandwiches. The ad included the following verbiage: "Stay Cool... Treat yourself by enjoying an ice cream dessert. When you order, you're supporting families like the Thiele's across the Midwest. We think that's pretty sweet. Runza makes it all better, and Midwest Dairy Farmers make us better." This campaign resulted in the sale of approximately 111,096 incremental pounds of milk!

Capitalizing on the importance of recipe promotions

Midwest Dairy continuously explores ways to drive dairy sales through online recipe promotions. Research shows that 88 percent of consumers use online recipes, with 17 percent of those consumers using them daily. Targeting online shoppers with these recipes presents an opportunity, as 53 percent

of consumers admit to adding items to their online shopping cart after seeing an online recipe. Midwest Dairy uses recipe promotions to reach consumers looking for nutritious recipes to make their family and to inspire these consumers to use the dairy products they love in innovative ways in the kitchen. Also, once a new recipe is tried and enjoyed by the family, odds are it will be repeated for future meals, boosting consumption of dairy!



To inspire shoppers to make dairy-centric recipes, Midwest Dairy partnered with Chicory, an e-commerce advertising platform known for transforming recipe content into commerce media. Checkoff worked with them to tie dairy messaging with recipes featuring or pairing well with dairy products. During the back-to-school season, Midwest Dairy partnered with Chicory to drive sales of dairy products, specifically milk, cheese, and yogurt. Dairy messaging appeared in recipes featuring dairy as ingredients, for example, weeknight dinner planning and healthy snacks for kids. As consumers skimmed online recipes, they saw ads targeting key ingredients and encouraged them to add the featured dairy ingredients to their online cart to make the dish. These ads also highlighted dairy's nutritional value, specifically its great protein source, and followed the tagline "Parent Approved."

This campaign was originally set to run from September 1, 2023, to September 25, 2023, but it was extended through October 22, 2023, due to positive results. Consumer engagement with these recipes exceeded the usual performance of campaigns like this through Chicory. Both the -through rate, indicating interest, and the add-to-cart, indicating purchase intent, performed well. During this period, this campaign drove 12,733,902 impressions, resulting in almost 4.8 million incremental dairy items going through the register. This campaign strategically ran at the same time as other retailer activations in the Midwest Dairy region to increase the impact on overall dairy sales.

Midwest Dairy partnered again with Chicory during the holiday season. The holiday campaign successfully drove almost 10 million impressions and resulted in over three million incremental units across key dairy categories. Notably, cream and butter saw the greatest lift in sales, and the recipes that saw a high level of engagement included Pecan Cream Pie and Taco Casserole. This campaign strategically also ran at the same time as other retailer activations in the Midwest Dairy region to increase the impact on overall dairy sales.

Grocery partnerships drive dairy sales

Checkoff seeks opportunities to drive dairy product sales, starting with partners eager to work with checkoff to spotlight the dairy case. In 2023, two grocery retail partners saw significant results as we partnered on different campaigns throughout the year. Dierbergs and Coborn's moved incremental pounds of milk by bringing nutritious dairy products to their customers.

Dierbergs Markets

Midwest Dairy and Dierbergs Markets kicked off their 2023 partnership in the spring with two separate campaigns. At the end of March, Dierbergs worked with Caitlin Ladd, one of their brand ambassadors (social influencers who work exclusively with them), to develop a recipe and promote lactose-free milk. Ladd created a brownie recipe and talked about the benefits of using lactose-free milk for her son, who has lactose intolerance.



In April, Dierbergs and Midwest Dairy created another campaign focusing on driving sales and trust while highlighting cheese. Dierbergs worked with their recipe development team to develop a Three Cheese Quiche recipe that was promoted in digital ads, on Instagram, and through email. Running in conjunction with the recipe was a promotion for a shredded cheese brand that Dierbergs selected. Customers would earn \$2 in Dierbergs Rewards Points when they bought two bags of shredded cheese. Dierbergs also updated the Undeniably Dairy blog page and used in-store door clings with QR codes linking customers to the blog page.

The partnership continued into the summer, with two more campaigns celebrating National Ice Cream Day in July and back-to-school in August. In July, Dierbergs worked with their vendor community to support the campaign with discounted ice cream. The promotion was shared in their weekly ad, in social media, through in-store signage, and included in an email blast. The email blast was opened and read by 55 percent of those who received it, resulting in a direct correlation to coupon clicks. The social post had over 80,000 impressions and a higher-than-average engagement rate. Dierbergs also focused on driving dairy sales for the back-to-school campaign by leveraging their Rewards program and an ad block in their weekly ad. For the ad block, Dierbergs contacted their vendor community to provide deeper discounts on dairy products, with Midwest Dairy supporting the marketing. Dierbergs reports that 77 percent of customers who purchased the string cheese deal were reward members, showing that these customers are looking for special pricing with the intent to purchase. These two campaigns combined sold 196,012 incremental pounds of milk (IPM).

Dierbergs is a St. Louis, Missouri-based grocer with 26 locations in Missouri and Illinois. Throughout 2023, Midwest Dairy partnered with Dierbergs on six activations that impressively drove over 500,000 IPM.

Coborn's

Coborn's has also been an active checkoff partner. During April, Midwest Dairy partnered with Coborn's to call out the sustainability efforts of dairy farmers while driving incremental sales of dairy products. This campaign

included weekly emails, Facebook and Instagram posts, banner ads on coborns.com, Kids Cook at Home Cook-A-Long show (with the largest class to date), TV news show support, in-store intercom messaging, gas station TV messages, and in-store signage. Together, we reached over 650,000 consumers with our Sustainable Dairy messages in this campaign.

Midwest Dairy partnered with Coborn's again later in the year to offer consumers cheesy recipes to help enhance their grilled cheeseburger experience. Coborn's showcased these delicious, nutritious, and tasty recipes with unique cheese options and vendor coupons to celebrate National Dairy Month. "Your burger's missing something... the perfect topping. Cheese always hits the spot – it is local, nutritious, and udder-ly delicious," messaging brought consumers into their dairy aisles.

Coborn's Dietitian, Jessica Talbot, spotlighted the cheesy recipes and health benefits of protein, calcium, and vitamin B12 during the June 19th Twin Cities Live episode, which also featured a guest appearance from Minnesota's Princess Kay, Rachel Rynda. This monthlong event also included weekly emails, Facebook and Instagram posts with video Reels from local dietitians, banner ads on coborns.com, in-store intercom messaging, gas station TV messages, and in-store signage. This campaign sold approximately 770,000 incremental pounds of milk!

St. Cloud, Minnesota-based Coborn's currently has 77 grocery stores across Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin, Michigan, and Illinois under the Coborn's, Cash Wise Foods, Marketplace Foods, Hornbacher's, and Tadych's Marketplace Foods banners, as well as fuel, liquor, and pharmacy locations.

Research

Midwest Dairy and The Hatchery Chicago Partner for the second year

Midwest Dairy and The Hatchery Chicago have partnered again to fuel dairy innovation in 2023. Advancing dairy research is a key strategy of dairy checkoff, and Midwest Dairy funds research efforts that solve industry challenges and partner with those that drive demand for dairy. This partnership, now in its second year, focuses on supporting innovative food and beverage entrepreneurs.

In 2022, Midwest Dairy first partnered with one of North America's largest food and beverage incubators, The Hatchery Chicago. The Hatchery Chicago is a non-profit food and beverage incubator that supports local entrepreneurs in building and growing successful food businesses, cultivating local job opportunities for people from all backgrounds, and accelerating inclusive economic growth on Chicago's West side. Together, we hosted a pitch contest offering the winner six months of free access to a commercial kitchen in Chicago's Garfield Park.



Midwest Dairy was proud to partner with The Hatchery Chicago again to relaunch this contest in 2023, but this year, two winners were awarded access to commercial kitchens. As before, the contest is open to established businesses that use 30 percent dairy in their ingredient base with no alternative dairy products. The first place receives one year of free rent to a commercial kitchen, while the second-place winner receives six months.

Midwest Dairy hosted the annual pitch contest in Chicago in October 2023 in front of a panel of three judges who are successful colleagues across the dairy industry. The knowledge and feedback from these judges help determine the winners.

Congratulations to this year's first-place winner, Bakr Cookies. Alexa Ryan is the founder of Bakr Cookies, located in the heart of Chicago. Bakr Cookies prides itself on offering real butter, fair trade chocolate, clean ingredients, flakey sea salt, and elevated flavors. Bakr Cookies also envisions sourcing butter locally from Midwest Dairy farmers and assisting with research and development. The \$14.2 billion cookie segment is expected to grow 20 percent over the next five years, making this cookie business excited for the future. Bakr Cookies will receive a private kitchen with window co-branded signage for 12 months at The Hatchery Chicago.

The second-place winner is Howdy Breakfast Buns (Howdy). Howdy specializes in Texas-Czech-style kolaches with a unique milk bread-style dough. This high dairy content dough and overnight cold-proofing process create a tender, light dough that customers love. Founders Tom Bovio and Eric Liu started Howdy during the pandemic. Howdy is currently sold in 35 cafes and bars, street festivals, farmers markets, and even at Lollapalooza. Tom and Eric would like to see their product expanded to wholesale, additional farmers' markets, and grocery stores. Howdy will receive a private kitchen with window co-branded signage for six months.

Midwest Dairy and The Hatchery Chicago are proud to award kitchens to two new businesses. By having two winners, Checkoff is encouraging even more dairy innovation and sales with the goal of allowing food vendors to create a long-standing business that can grow into their own space to continue selling and promoting dairy products.

Welcoming a new 2023/2024 Midwest Dairy Food Research Strategic Plan

In 2023, the Midwest Dairy Food Research Center (MDFRC) underwent significant changes, welcoming many new members to its team and identifying areas for enhancement. These exciting changes included hiring a new Executive Director, updating the strategic plan, and creating a new mission statement. The new MDFRC mission statement sets the foundation for the center: “We develop dairy scientists and innovate dairy technologies, ingredients, and products through industry-driven collaborative research to drive regional and global opportunities for Midwest dairy farmers.”



Checkoff was thrilled to welcome Dr. Jayendra Amamcharla as the new Executive Director in 2023, a name recognized and familiar to many. For the past two years, Dr. Amamcharla has served as the Midwest Dairy Foods Research Center Interim Director working at Kansas State University. He became an Associate Professor of Dairy Fractionation and Separation Science in the Department of Food Science and Nutrition at the University of Minnesota. Dr. Amamcharla received his undergraduate and graduate degrees in dairy technology and dairy engineering, respectively, and completed his doctoral degree in Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering at North Dakota State University. Subsequently, he worked as a Postdoctoral Research Associate in the Dairy Science Department at South Dakota State University. He also received the 2017 American Dairy Science Association Foundation Scholar Award in Dairy Foods. His work and leadership results as Interim Executive Director have made him a valuable member of the MDFRC and have prepared him well for the Executive Director position.

The Strategic Plan was also reviewed and updated to better reflect the center's priorities in 2023. Midwest Dairy collaborated with a few industry leaders and experts to join in on the creation of the new strategic planning process. Their knowledge and experience helped shape a plan that aligns with industry expectations, making the Center stand out for its exceptional research to put farmers' dollars to their best use.

The strategic plan used in years past was made up of four focus areas: Food Quality and Safety, Sustainability, Exports, and Consumer Solutions. Our committee of industry experts condensed these four focus areas into two focus areas: Consumer Solutions and Industry Solutions. This decision was based on research from the past, concluding that all research falls into one of these two areas. These two areas are broken down below:

Consumer Solutions

- Modern wellness: Targeting specific consumer segments (Youth/schools/Gen Z) with dairy-derived components to enhance immunity, calmness, energy, and digestive health.
- Foundational research: Investigating milk components to improve consumer experience, including higher protein, high fat, clean label, and sugar reduction.
- E-Commerce: Enhancing packaging, food safety, and sensor technology.
- Sustainability education: Informing consumers about sustainability practices.
- Nutrition: Developing strategies to understand and enhance the bioavailability of nutrients in dairy products.

Industry Solutions

- Export facilitation: Enable cheese and dairy ingredients exports through product and process interventions, shelf life, quality, and functionality.
- Quality and safety enhancement: Improving the quality, safety, and functionality of dairy ingredients and permeates powder.
- Market expansion: Exploring new platforms and untapped markets for dairy.
- Upcycling: Transforming dairy co-products through upcycling efforts.
- Analytics: Employing tools and testing methods to measure and predict the quality and safety of products/ingredients.
- Microbial innovation: Introducing novel and scalable technologies to improve microbial quality and safety of dairy products and ingredients.
- Resource use: Optimize water and energy usage and wastewater management.

While the Center is confident in these two new focus areas, they wanted to ensure that Food Safety Quality and Sustainability continued as foundational drivers influencing these new focus areas. After much discussion, the planning group felt that "Sustainability" and "Food safety and Quality" were inherently part of each funded research project and sometimes fell into multiple focus areas. Now with only two categories, there are no gray areas. Research is either categorized as a consumer solution or an industry solution and can incorporate both foundational drivers without being 'defined as one or the other.

Midwest Dairy is proud of the updates made to the center in 2023 and is confident these changes are vital to the future MDFRC research. Like before, MDFRC upholds its core values of people, collaboration, foundational research, trust, and, of course, excellence. MDFRC will continue to work positively on the farmers' behalf as we roll out this new strategic plan in 2024 and beyond.

Remarks from Executive Director of MDFRC, Dr. Jayendra Amamcharla

The year 2023 was unique and fruitful for the Midwest Dairy Foods Research Center (MDFRC). The new Strategic Plan was a rewarding process and has been completed. I can confidently say that it is being introduced and accepted by all the center's stakeholders. Under this new strategic plan, the MDFRC's vision is to "develop dairy scientists and innovate dairy technologies, ingredients, and products through industry-driven collaborative research to drive regional and global opportunities for Midwest Dairy farmers." This statement is important to me, and I know this is only possible through collaborative efforts by principal investigators in six member universities, graduate students, industry partners, Midwest Dairy, and Dairy Management Inc.



In 2023, I joined the Department of Food Science and Nutrition at the University of Minnesota and ultimately took on the responsibility of director of MDFRC. I am passionate about all dairy research, specifically my own in dairy fractionation and separation science. I was also pleased this year to welcome two new faculty members, Drs. Prafulla Salunke and Maneesha Mohan are based at South Dakota State University (SDSU) and have quickly established their research labs at SDSU and industry connections.

I want to call out a huge accomplishment in 2023. Dr. Prafulla Salunke organized a short course on membrane filtration for the dairy industry, attended by 41 eager industry professionals. Because of this success, he is gearing up to continue the short course in 2024 and beyond. Also, he organized a food safety workshop for an 11-member dairy farmer group. The pilot plant facilities (Institute for Dairy Ingredient Processing, Davis Dairy Plant at SDSU, and The Joseph J. Warthesen Food Processing Center at the University of Minnesota) continue to work with several dairy companies in the region and help the industry with their research and development activities.

Notably, Dr. Stephanie Clark retired from Iowa State University in 2023. Her passion for the dairy industry and commitment to mentoring the next generation of dairy professionals have impacted many significantly. As I look into 2024, filling her position with a new dairy faculty will be crucial for maintaining the momentum in dairy education and research at Iowa State University. I am pleased to announce that the position is expected to be filled by this fall. The spring research planning meeting, hosted at SDSU in 2023, was attended by more than 60 professionals representing the dairy industry and the member universities. At the meeting, we shared research needs and interacted with the faculty to get to know each other better. I am happy to report that we received 16 pre-proposals during this meeting, and 14 proposals were invited to be presented at the annual meeting in Minnesota. After the annual meeting, the Operational Advisory Committee (OAC) approved five new projects, making it a total of 15 ongoing research projects funded by Midwest Dairy.

The graduation of nine students from the MDFRC in 2023 is also worth mentioning, as their subsequent entry into the dairy and food industry is a significant achievement and aligns perfectly with the center's mission. This is an example of the MDFRC's role in advancing dairy science through innovative research and contributing to much-needed workforce development for the dairy industry.

On behalf of the MDFRC, I sincerely thank the dairy farmers who make up the great Midwest dairy industry for their support and trust over the 2023 year.

- Dr. Jayendra Amamcharla

Partners learn more during consumer insights webinars

In an increasingly complex, fast-moving world, Midwest Dairy shares impactful market intelligence through webinars that help checkoff partners effectively target today's consumers. By investing in best-in-class consumer insights, Midwest Dairy helps partners understand what is exciting for today's consumers and uncover new opportunities to grow dairy sales.

In 2023, Midwest Dairy conducted four insightful webinars on the following topics:

Yogurt: Understanding Growth Opportunities

Twenty-seven partners attended this webinar to learn more about the health benefits of yogurt. According to USDA estimates released at the end of 2022, U.S. consumers consumed 14.3 million pounds of yogurt in 2021, an impressive five percent increase over 2020. In recent years, there has been a notable rise in demand for low-sugar, high-protein, and nutrient-dense foods. These are key factors driving the market. In addition, sales of lactose-free yogurt variants have increased due in part to rising lactose intolerance in the U.S. population. Growth has also been propelled by the increasing awareness about the health benefits of consuming yogurt.



Health & Wellness Trends: Growth Opportunities for Dairy

In attendance at this webinar were 18 partners who joined to learn what motivates consumers at the dairy case. In the health and wellness landscape, consumers are hard to pin down. What's viewed as "healthy" to one may not be to another. This reinforces the idea that consumers will use contrasting strategies to reach the same goal. According to research, over 80 percent of consumers in the Midwest Dairy region believe dairy naturally fits into a healthy lifestyle. This means that dairy brands can align with and support consumers' health goals. Partners learned how the dairy industry can leverage growth in the ever-evolving health and wellness space.

Online Grocery Shopping: Growth Opportunities for Dairy

In attendance at this webinar were 25 partners who joined to explore strategies for motivating online shoppers to add dairy to their carts. Research shows that, on average, dairy shoppers spend twice as much as other shoppers. However, 75 percent of consumers have concerns about the freshness of food purchased online. During this webinar, Midwest Dairy presented our recent proprietary research to partners, showing how retailers can motivate online shoppers in our region to add dairy to their carts.

Cheese: Understanding Opportunities for Future Growth

Twenty-four partners joined this webinar to discuss cheese sales, which experienced an impressive year in 2023. Mintel, a leader in consumer research, forecasts cheese sales will exceed \$31 billion in 2023. Although inflation has been the main driver of dollar growth in the past two years, low category attrition has proven the category's staying power in consumer carts. Mintel also predicts cheese sales will continue to be strong in 2024 and beyond.



Developing Leaders

Thirteen farmers graduate from DEAL Class 2

The Dairy Experience and Agricultural Leadership Program (DEAL) members met this summer for the final phase of the 18-month leadership opportunity, focusing on leadership opportunities within checkoff and offering media training. The presentations and experiences during this phase helped DEAL members learn more about the Midwest Dairy regional governance structure provided an opportunity to practice their public speaking skills.

On the first day, Charles Krause, Chair of Midwest Dairy, and Molly Pelzer, CEO of Midwest Dairy, welcomed the DEAL members, and the group participated in the Midwest Dairy corporate board meeting. Because they attended division board meetings last summer, it was beneficial for them to learn more about our corporate board this summer. Following the board meeting, they heard from Abby Kornegay, Issues and Engagement Manager with the Animal Ag Alliance, who discussed animal rights activists, tactics they use to promote their anti-animal agriculture agenda, and how farmers can build trust in their community and with consumers. At the end of the day, the DEAL members had the opportunity to network with corporate board members at a supper.

On day two, DEAL members participated in media training facilitated by Midwest Dairy's corporate communications partner, Padilla. Padilla provided tips, tricks, and best practices for handling media interviews. The DEAL members then practiced these new skills through mock newspaper and TV interviews. One farmer said, "I enjoyed the media training and learning some of the tips for better presentations that Padilla put forward." The group also participated in a farm tour at Dakota Line Dairy and had some fun while axe throwing during the evening events.

On the final day, DEAL members heard about the power of relationships from Aaron Putze, Chief Officer of Strategy and Brand Management for the Iowa Soybean Association. His presentation left the group feeling motivated and inspired. DEAL members Paige Roberts and Kevin Borst shared more about their families, farms, hobbies, and interests. The meeting concluded with a group discussion about the program. Post-survey results showed positive feedback from the farmers, with one farmer commenting, "I think that DEAL has given a broader perspective for the ways that checkoff dollars are being used." Another farmer said, "I enjoyed meeting other young dairy farmers across the Midwest and becoming friends with them and meeting so many strong leaders within agriculture. It was awesome to have the opportunity to meet and talk with the speakers we had at each phase."

On behalf of Midwest Dairy, thank you to the graduates from DEAL Class 2. Your willingness to learn and passion for the dairy industry is contagious, and we are incredibly eager to see what these industry leaders and advocates will achieve. We appreciate your time and commitment to the program!

Congratulations to these Class 2 DEAL members:

- Courtney Lintker, IL
- Ray Hildebrandt, IL
- James Goldsmith, IA
- Dan Venteicher, IA
- Nicole Engelken, IA
- Paige Roberts, MN
- Kevin Borst, MN
- Lindsey Borst, MN
- Elle Tibor, MN
- Natalie Barka, MN
- Stacy Rethman, KS
- Jessi Sayers, NE
- Cole Hoyer, SD

Breaking through the Noise training is now available to farmers

In 2023, Midwest Dairy partnered with Janice Person, founder, and CEO of Grounded Communications, to offer a new training to dairy farmers called *Breaking Through the Noise in Person or Online*. This two-hour training focuses on storytelling, something checkoff tells farmers is important. Checkoff aimed to go a step further by providing farmers with an easy process to further enhance their storytelling abilities.

Midwest Dairy's first farmer workshop of 2023 kicked off with participants traveling from Minnesota, Iowa, and Illinois to Galena, Illinois. Over two dozen farmers joined to learn more about how Midwest Dairy works to build sales and trust in dairy while also eager to sharpen their storytelling skills.



Day one featured Midwest Dairy staff sharing insights about how Midwest Dairy is building trust with Gen Z through different partnerships, followed by learning how sales increased through in-store and digital dairy promotions with food service partners. A farmer panel showcased creative solutions to local dairy promotion and emphasized the Undeniably Dairy grant program and leadership opportunities for farmers. The evening activities provided ample time for networking and socializing.

On the second day, farmers participated in the *Breaking Through the Noise* session. During the session, participants shared where they show up as the dairy expert, identified on-farm distractions, discussed challenges we all face in sharing our story, and, most importantly, the rewarding reasons why we share our story with consumers. The second half of the session focused on the formula to create captivating stories in-person and online.

Initial survey results indicated that after the event, farmers improved their understanding of how Midwest Dairy works to build sales and trust, identify leadership opportunities, and learn what resources are available. On average, the *Breaking Through the Noise* session provided helpful content and exceeded attendees' expectations. One participant shared, "I love telling our story, so hearing how I can polish my storytelling to make it more effective was helpful."

Fifteen farmers from across Missouri and Kansas also utilized this new training as they came together to Kansas City for fellowship, community service, and to sharpen their storytelling skills. On day one, the group enjoyed a warehouse tour and volunteered at Harvesters Food Pantry, dividing and packaging food boxes for distribution. The attendees also tried their hand at axe throwing as they teamed up for a little friendly competition and team building to round out day one.

Day two focused on crafting messages through another *Breaking Through the Noise* workshop, again led by Person. This group focused on building skills and the confidence to create memorable connections through storytelling, even when surrounded by noise and chaos. As one dairy farmer said, "It's taking

storytelling to the next level when learning how to customize it to your audience." The excursion ended with farmers learning from Midwest Dairy staff members about building trust with partners and deep-diving into the newest checkoff partnerships in progress.

So far, the *Breaking Through the Noise* training has proved positive for attendees, and Midwest Dairy hopes to continue to allow more farmers to participate in the new year. Contact your Midwest Dairy Farmer Relations Manager to learn more about this training and how you can participate.

Celebrating another successful year for the Dairy Ambassador program

The Dairy Ambassador program is an educational and leadership opportunity for high school and college students passionate about the dairy industry. This program allows individuals to connect with consumers and share dairy's story while networking with their peers and industry professionals. In 2023, Midwest Dairy had 26 dairy ambassadors from Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

Those selected as Dairy Ambassadors spend one year representing dairy farmers in their states. At the end of their year, they are eligible to apply for a scholarship to compensate for their hard work and time. To kick off the year and help the chosen ambassadors prepare for conversations with consumers, Midwest Dairy offered a virtual ENGAGE training facilitated by the Center for Food Integrity. This training emphasized making connections based on shared values. It also gave the ambassadors tips and techniques to have meaningful conversations with consumers to help build trust in dairy foods and dairy farming. Additionally, the ENGAGE training provided an opportunity for the dairy ambassadors to meet and network with ambassadors from other states. After that, and with continued help from Midwest Dairy staff throughout the year, this great group of young dairy leaders was ready to conquer the year ahead.

Throughout 2023, the Midwest Dairy Ambassadors promoted the dairy community and supported Midwest Dairy's mission to give consumers an excellent dairy experience at various industry and consumer events. Keep reading to learn more!

Illinois

The Illinois Dairy Ambassadors participated in numerous events, including promoting the Illinois dairy industry at the Jr. Holstein Spring Thing, Marcoot's Cheese Fest, Kilgus Farmstead Breakfast, and the Illinois State Fair. They also posted over 24 times on social media to reach consumers online with fun facts about the dairy industry. A highlight of the year was when the Dairy Ambassadors connected directly with their peers at the University of Illinois Men's Basketball game in early March, where the Fighting Illini defeated the Michigan Wolverines.



Iowa

The Iowa Dairy Ambassadors attended numerous events across the state, connecting consumers to dairy. Some highlights included attending an Iowa Wolves basketball game and the Iowa Agriculture Water Alliance field day, several open houses celebrating June as National Dairy Month, county fairs, the Iowa State Fair, and more. In addition to attending events, ambassadors were active on social media by sharing recipes, celebrating dairy holidays, and showcasing life on the farm with followers.

Minnesota

Minnesota's three ambassadors positively contributed to Midwest Dairy's mission of bringing dairy to life for a better world! One of the year's key highlights was partnering with Cub Foods during National Dairy Month.

Ambassadors utilized their communication skills and provided key video messages focused on animal care, sustainability, and nutrition, which Cub Foods later used through digital marketing channels. Other activities included working with the Minnesota Vikings and connecting with consumers at the Minnesota State Fair.

Nebraska

The Nebraska Dairy Ambassadors took part in 60 events and leadership opportunities and were committed to promoting dairy through several photos posted on Facebook. Some of the events ambassadors served at as dairy advocates included the University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Agriculture Sciences and Natural Resources Appreciation Event, Cream of the Crop Dairy Show, Omaha Baseball Village Booth during the College World Series, Nebraska State Fair, Ag Literacy Festivals, and many more.

North Dakota

The North Dakota Ambassadors participated in over ten events, reaching nearly 4,500 consumers of all ages. Two large events they attended were the Red River Valley Fair and the North Dakota State Fair. Other events included elementary classroom visits, the North Dakota State University Ag Day, Fargo Living Ag Classroom, and helping at the LegenDAIRY Event at Van Bedaf Dairy. Dairy messages were shared on their social media, and a Facebook Live event from the North Dakota State Fair was also featured.

South Dakota

Four dairy ambassadors of South Dakota helped build trust in dairy by participating in 44 events and leadership opportunities. Some events attended include the Central Plains Dairy Expo Midwest Dairy exhibit, Dairy Fest farm open house, National Dairy Month farm open houses, Young Leaders in Agriculture Conference, the Sioux Empire Fair, and the South Dakota State Fair. The group also created 22 social media posts and videos to be shared throughout the year.

Besides in-person events, dairy ambassadors also connected with consumers online. There is a huge opportunity to engage with a large audience online, and to help them prepare for this task; Midwest Dairy offered a social media tips and tricks webinar to help elevate the dairy ambassadors' social media presence. You can view and follow along with different dairy ambassadors by following the Iowa, Illinois, Nebraska, and South Dakota pages.

For more information about the Midwest Dairy Ambassador program, please reach out to your Midwest Dairy Farmer Relations Manager.

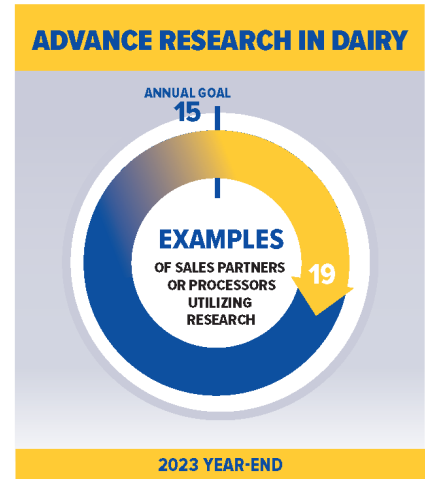
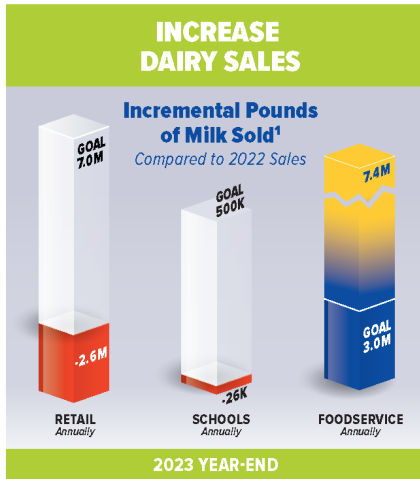


2023 Annual Scorecard

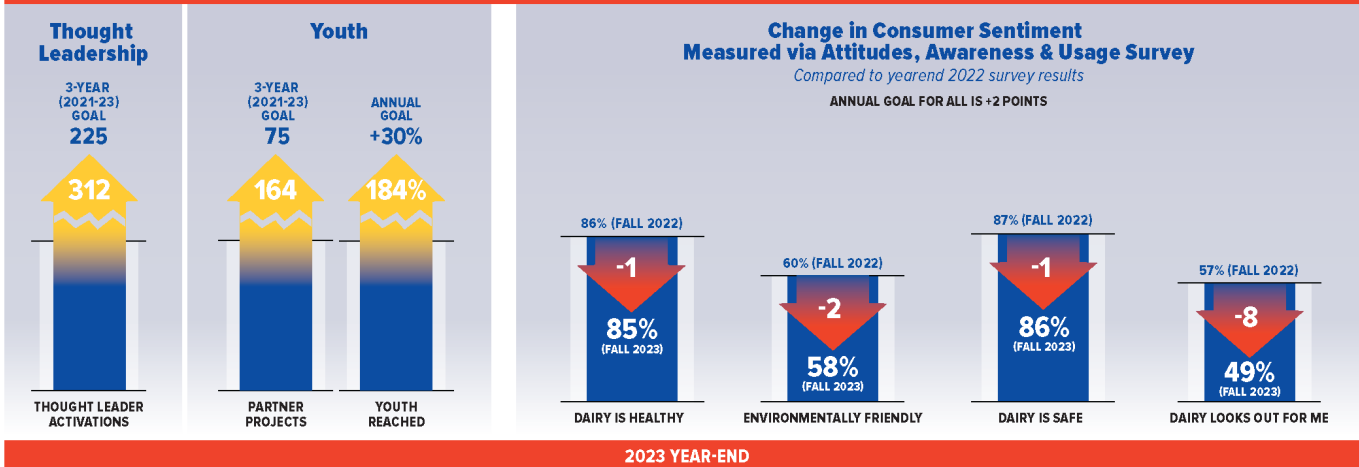


SCORECARD BUSINESS OBJECTIVES YEAR-END 2023

Results for 3-year goals are showing progress through this last year of the 3-year plan.



GROW TRUST IN DAIRY



¹ Sales results are reported by the equivalent pounds of milk required to make specific dairy products.



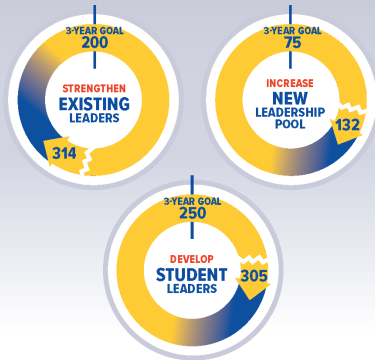
SCORECARD

FOUNDATIONAL OBJECTIVES

YEAR-END 2023

Results for 3-year goals are showing progress through this last year of the 3-year plan.

DEVELOP FARM & COMMUNITY LEADERS FOR DAIRY

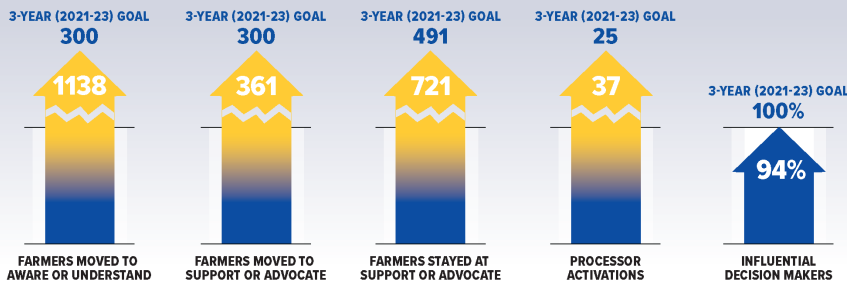
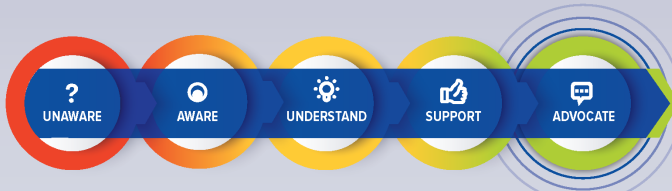


ENHANCE MIDWEST DAIRY EMPLOYEE CULTURE

Gallup Q12 scores reflect the status of 12 items that Gallup research has consistently found to measure employee engagement as linked to business outcomes.

Item	Score	Change (2023 over 2022)
Q1 I know what is expected of me at work.	4.42	.00
Q2 I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right.	4.19	↓.25
Q3 At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.	3.89	↓.09
Q4 In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work.	4.26	↓.01
Q5 My supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person.	4.43	↑.10
Q6 There is someone at work who encourages my development.	3.90	↓.02
Q7 At work, my opinions seem to count.	3.68	↓.13
Q8 The mission or purpose of my organization makes me feel my job is important.	4.42	↑.03
Q9 My associates or fellow employees are committed to doing quality work.	4.23	↓.06
Q10 I have a best friend at work.	3.96	↑.40
Q11 In the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress.	4.47	↑.16
Q12 This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow.	4.08	↓.21

CREATE DAIRY CHECKOFF ADVOCATES



These are baseline mean scores on a 5 point scale.

Midwest Dairy's Engagement Index was 58%—compared to U.S. Average Engagement Index of 34% for the same timeframe.